Section **4**

Water color painting

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This is an intimate composite of New York's Chinatown, which Kingman often paints.
He added the locomotive at the left because it is one of his favorite shapes.

This poetic, imaginary landscape, illuminated by a blue moon is typical of Kingman's
lyric style. He cannot identify the birds — says, "I never look at them up close."

Water color painting

Now begins the transparent water color section of your course. If you have never experimented with this exciting medium you have a thrilling adventure ahead of you. Those who have facility in handling several mediums are warm in their praise of water color's flexibility. It is ideal for making quick, on-the-spot color notes and sketches that can later be made into finished paintings in the studio. Its fluid, rapid-drying quality enables you to complete a painting in jig time out in the open before your light changes too much. With it you can capture moods and aspects of nature that are fleeting in their beauty.

Water color is clean and fresh. It's a medium to play with — to explore and discover with. You will have "happy accidents" with it that will be most satisfying. Sometimes your "quickies" will be the best of all — especially if you have planned well in advance. No two experiences with water color are alike. The pleasing and exciting effects that result from your splashing about in it are legion.

It is an ideal medium for the amateur because of its spontaneous quality. Short spurts of painting with water color during after-hours, week-ends and vacations will yield you rich harvests. Its tools and materials are compact and light enough for you to take most anywhere you go — so that you can enjoy every half-hour to the hilt. Altogether it is a most satisfying means of self expression.

Water color is economical to use. The pigments are so intense in color that a little goes a long way when diluted with water. Also the painting surfaces you normally use are less expensive than those required for opaque mediums, due to their cheaper construction and the smaller sizes in which you usually work.

We may give you the impression that transparent water color must only be used quickly. This is not intended. You can paint as deliberately as you like. But best results come from first planning your painting, sketching it in, and painting it — all in one continuous operation.

Some say water color is the most difficult of all mediums to master; that one must be expert to control it. This is no more true than to say that tennis is harder to learn than golf. To become proficient in any sport or any kind of painting one must first master the tools of the trade. One must learn all the nuances, tricks, and techniques that the scope of the medium allows. In the following pages, that is just what we propose to teach you, so that you can go on from there and have fun.

Don't confuse *transparent* water color with the *opaque* medium just because both are mixed with water. With *transparent*, the white paper — showing through — makes your light tones. With *opaque*, light tones and whites are made with white pigment. Your transparent water color palette contains no white.

We will introduce you to this medium in a series of logical steps. First we will familiarize you with all the various materials that you use in transparent water color painting. This will be followed by a demonstration of the many interesting brush and color techniques that will enable you to get such astounding and varied effects in your later work. And last we will let you "sit beside" Dong Kingman, Adolf Dehn, and Stevan Dohanos while they paint actual pictures, step by step, and tell you how they do it.

We wish you much enjoyment and all success with this ever-so-versatile and articulate medium.
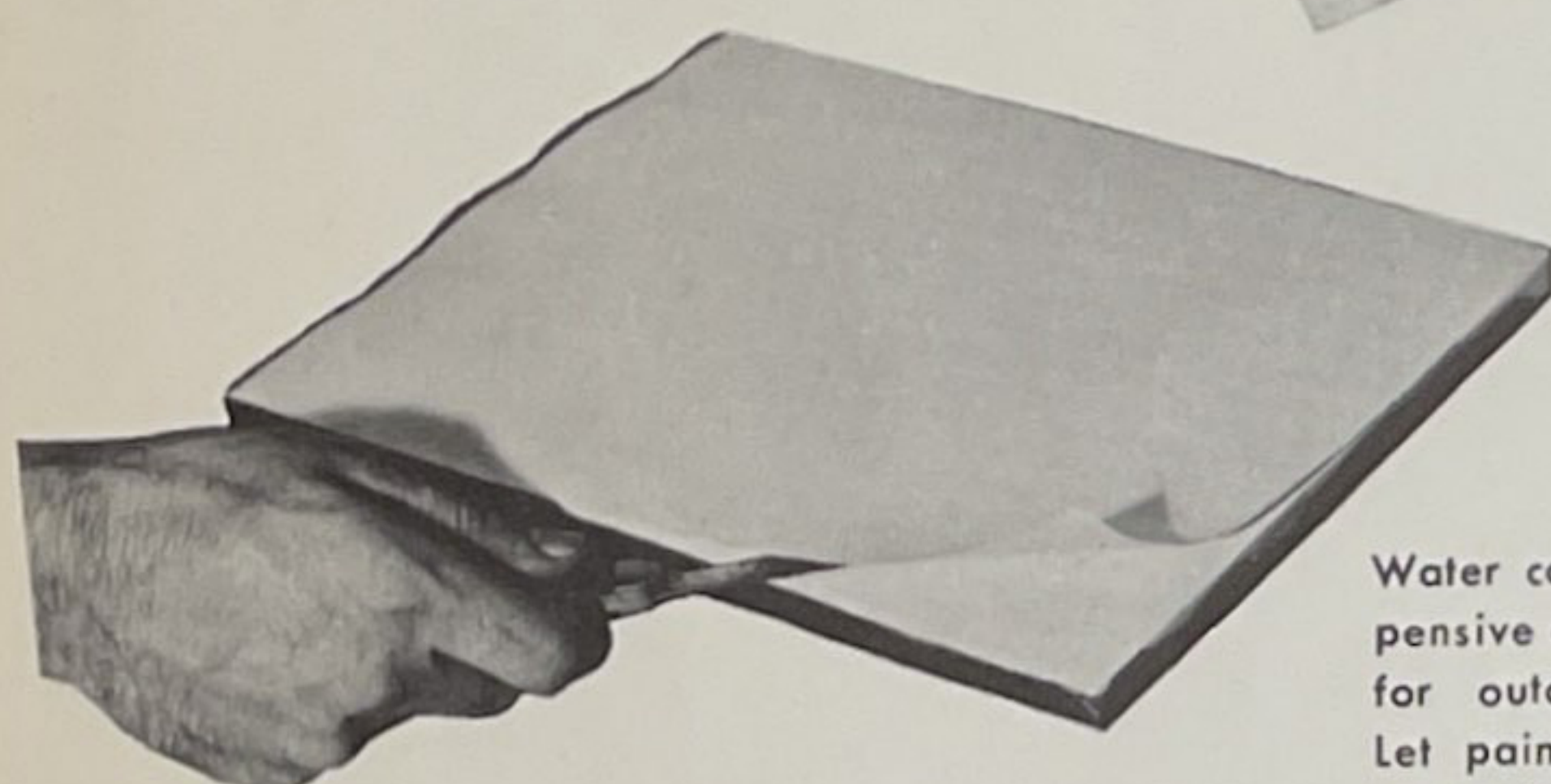
Reproduced actual size

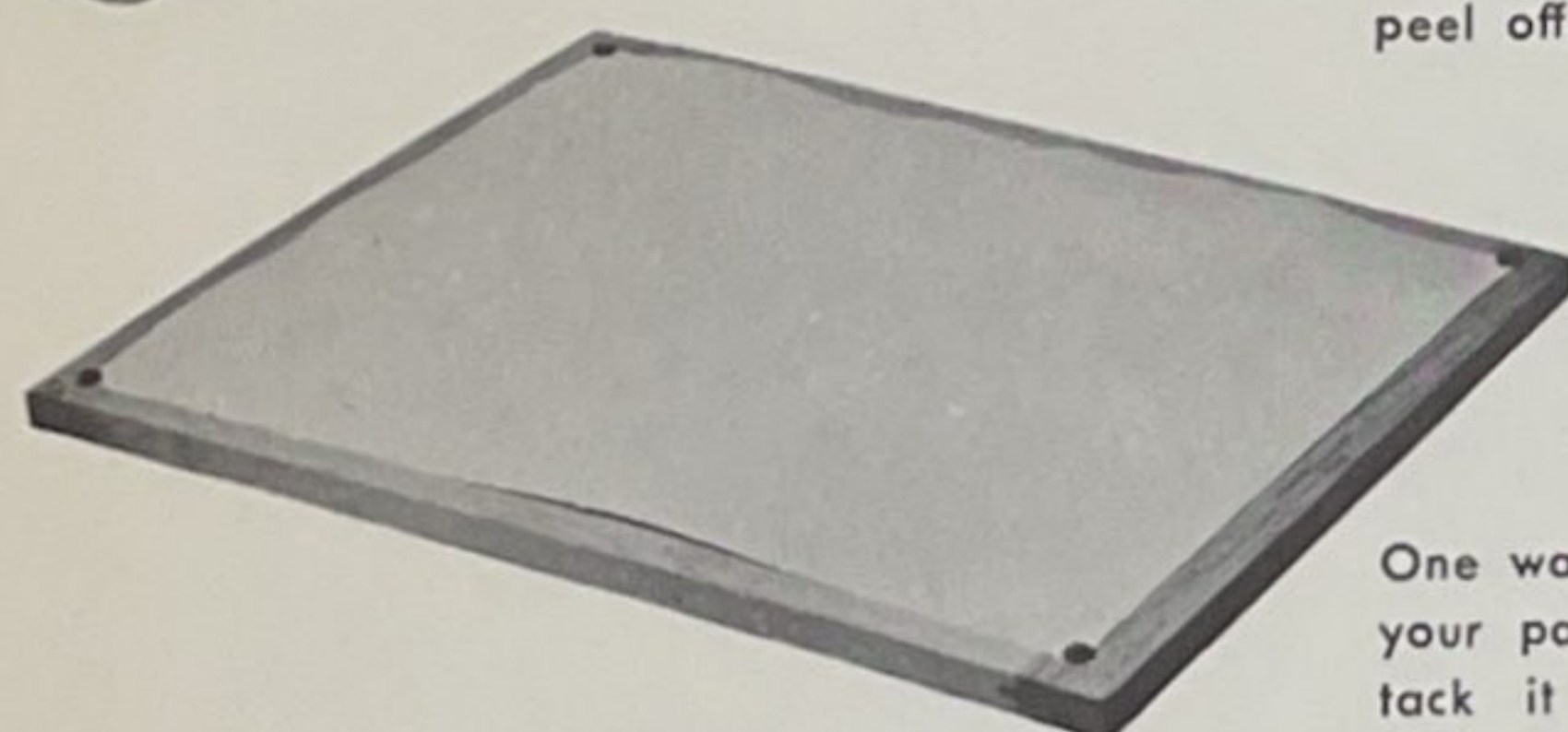This single, broad brush stroke shows how three different paper textures take the pigment.
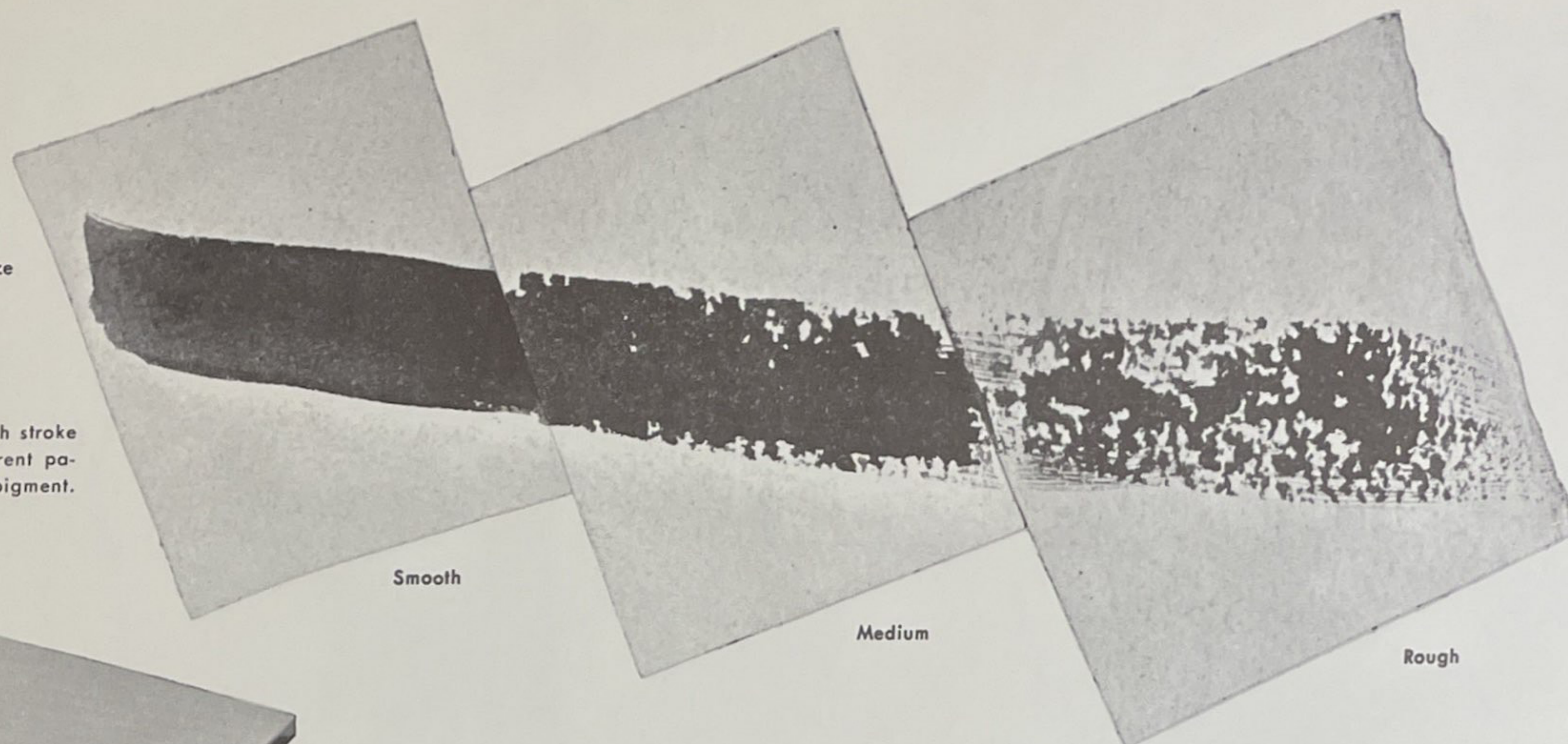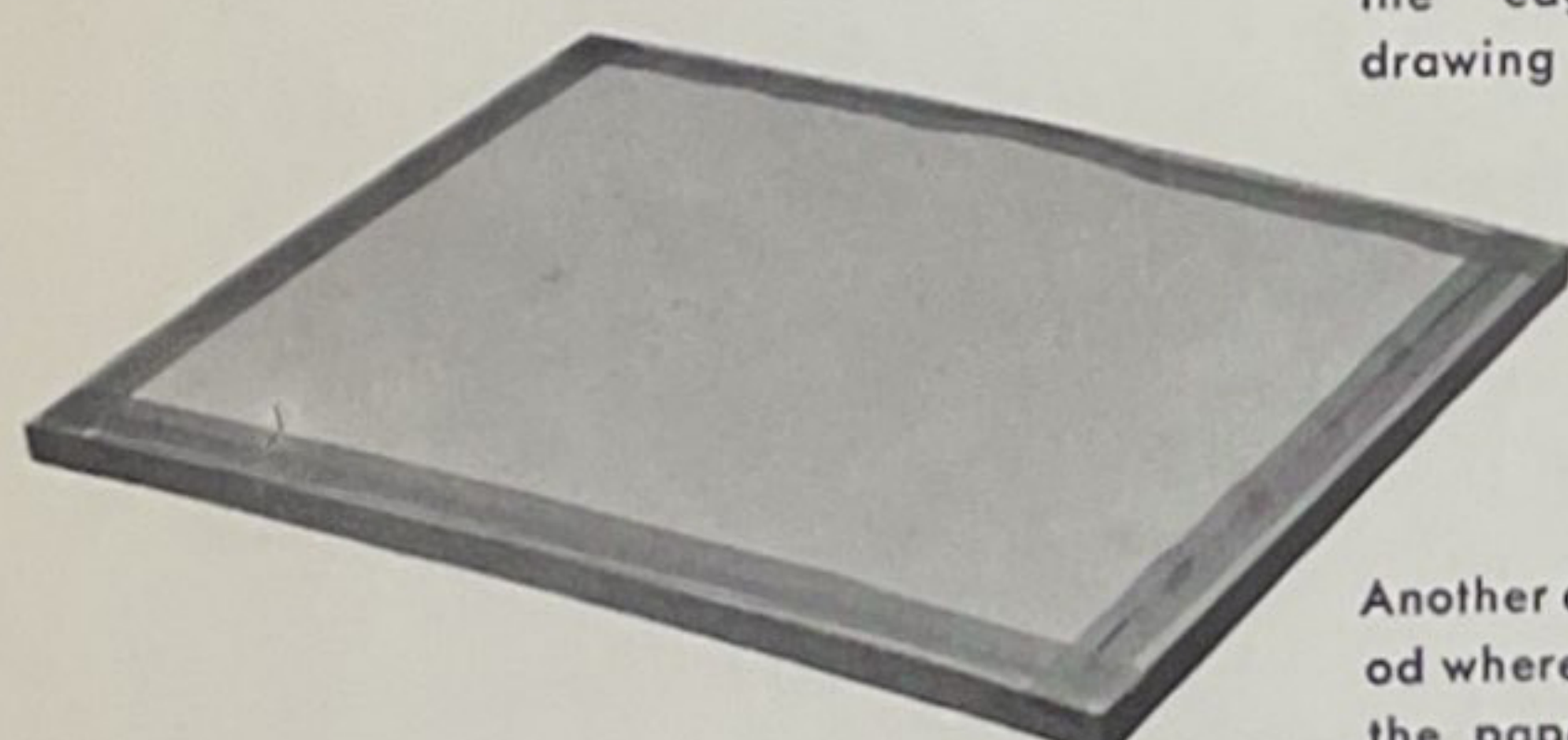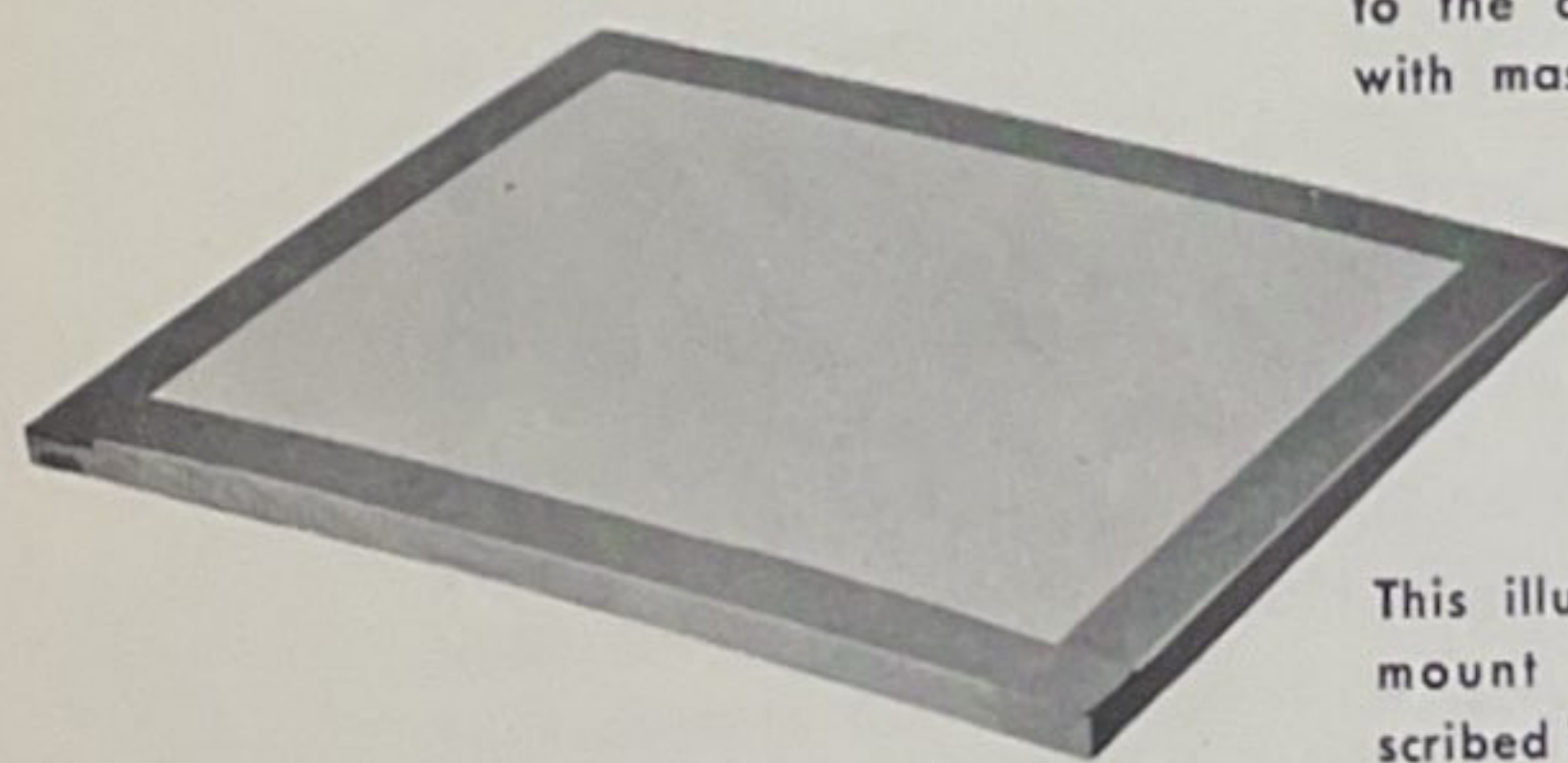
Smooth

Medium

Rough

Water color pad. Inexpensive and practicable for outdoors and in. Let painting dry, then peel off, as shown.

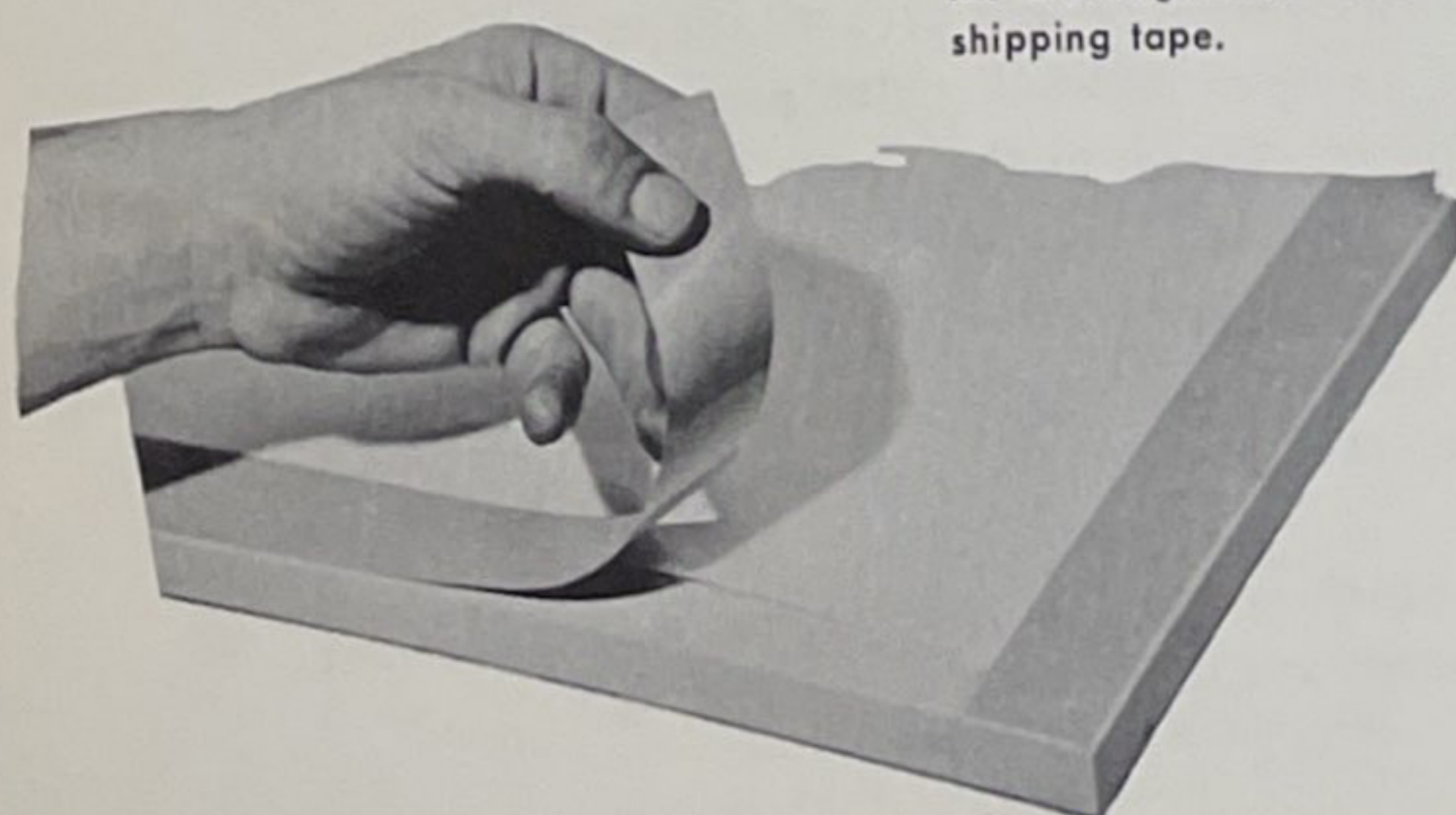One way to dry mount your paper — thumbtack it down around the edges to your drawing board.

Another dry mount method wherein the edges of the paper are secured to the drawing board with masking tape.

This illustrates the wet mount method, described in the main text.

Close-up of technique of gluing down the wet edges of the paper to the drawing board with shipping tape.

Water color paper

Your choice of paper is of extreme importance to you because of the major role it plays in the technique of water color painting. One surface texture will take a brush stroke one way, while other textures will give you different effects. (Look again at the three effects demonstrated above.) Therefore, it is wise to experiment with various paper textures and weights in your early training period to learn which best suits your style of working.

Speaking generally, water color papers come in three textures—smooth, medium or rough — and in three degrees of thickness or weight — thin, medium and thick.* Some prefer to work on a heavier, non-warping surface called "water color board" or "wash board." It consists of thin water color paper glued or mounted firmly on a heavier stock.

The best and most expensive papers are carefully made by hand out of fine materials. A good quality machine-made paper is considerably cheaper and is quite suitable for all purposes. It would be better, for economy's sake, to use this kind of paper while you are learning. Machine-made papers are available in all the various degrees of texture and thickness.

While water color paper comes in several stock sizes, the two measurements most commonly used are called "full sheet" (22 x 30 inches) and "half sheet" (22 x 15 inches). Naturally, either of these may be cut into smaller pieces.

The thicker the paper, the less the surface will wrinkle when dry — except when "wet mounted" which we cover in the paragraph below. If you intend to paint a large picture, you should use the heavy or thick type, because large size thin paper will buckle awkwardly when wet and will dry with an unpleasant wavy surface. For smaller pictures the medium type is satisfactory. Use thin paper only for practice and the smallest of picture areas.

The medium and thin papers may be wet mounted to make them smooth when finished and dry — even in fairly large pictures. To mount paper this way, wet both sides thoroughly and lay it flat on a wet wooden drawing board — leaving an inch or more of area showing around the wet paper. When the edges begin to wrinkle, press down with your hand and glue all four edges to the board with "shipping tape." (This comes in rolls with one side covered with water glue; it is used to seal packages for shipping.) When your painting is finished and dry, trim around the edges with a razor blade. No need to wet mount the heavier papers. Dry mounting is sufficient. This is easy — simply fasten your paper to the drawing board with thumbtacks or masking tape all around the edges.
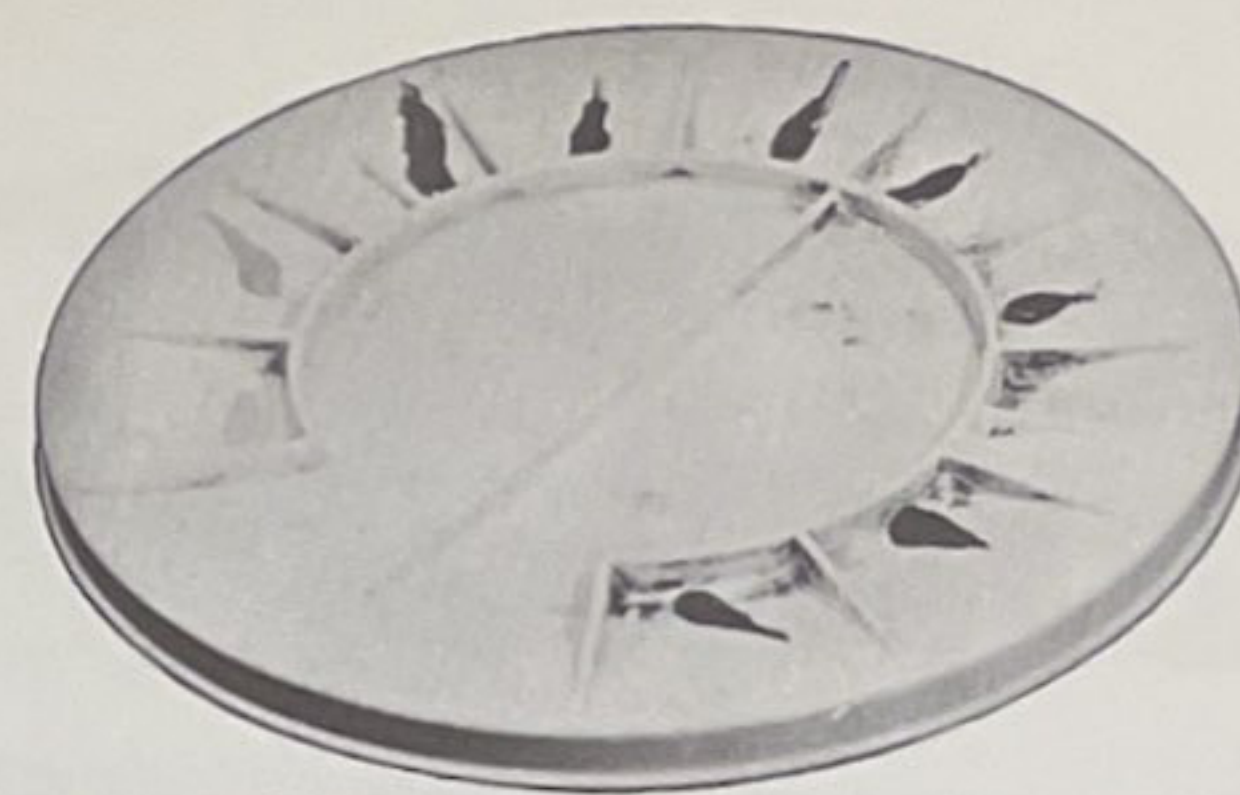
Water color pads are inexpensive and handy to use — especially outdoors. Just be sure not to detach your painting from the pad until it is quite dry.

Always store your paper flat — never rolled up — in a clean, dry place. Closed drawers of sufficient size are best. A closet shelf is good.

For those technically minded, the thin paper is called "70 lb.," the medium, "140 lb." and the heavy or thick, "300 lb." paper. These figures mean the weight per ream, which can be 480 to 516 sheets, according to Webster's Dictionary.

A round palette is popular and very practicable for both indoor and outdoor use.

This large white porcelain butcher's tray is one of the most satisfactory of palettes for indoor work.

This type of water color box is satisfactory and inexpensive. Has 12 mixing areas, holds brushes and 15 tubes of pigments. Good outdoors and in.

Water

Color

Accessories

This spiral wire brush washer is useful to dry brushes after washing.

Two water jars — like this one — are a *must* for every water colorist. If the covers are tight you can carry water in them for outdoor work.

This water color box is more elaborate. Has a thumb-hole folding palette for a cover. Box holds brushes, 15 pigments and has a carrying handle. For indoors and out.

Sponges for blotting and cleaning belong in any complete water color kit.

A folding stool is handy for outdoor use.

There are many types of water color easels. This kind is especially useful in that it both folds and is adjustable. Use it outdoors and in.

A knapsack is most useful for carrying painting accessories on outdoor trips.
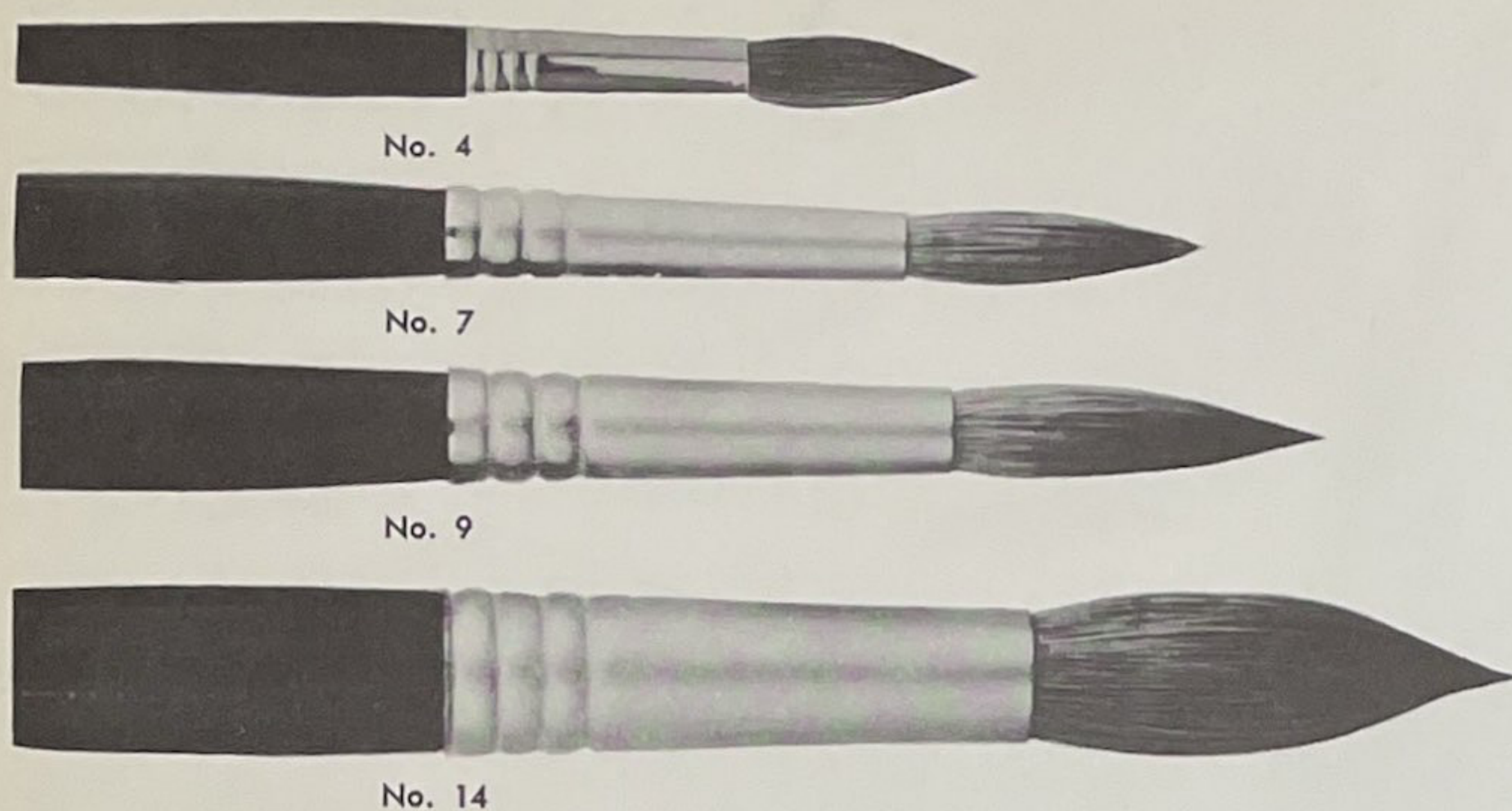
No. 4

No. 7

No. 9

No. 14

Round brushes

Your most useful type of brush will probably be the round shape shown at the left. The best ones are called "red sable" but come from the tail of the Asiatic mink, known as the kolinsky. It will pay you to buy good brushes and take care of them. With proper care they will last a long time.

When you have finished using a brush, clean it thoroughly in soap and water but do not wash out all the soap. This acts as a preservative and keeps the hairs pliable and springy. It also enables you to keep the brush sharply pointed. Always keep your brush tip up or lying flat—free from pressure.

When storing brushes for any length of time, put in a few moth balls or crystals of naptha-lene with them. If you use your brushes for oil painting they cannot ever be used for water color again.

Note that the brushes shown here have numbers — the smallest #4 and so on to the largest #14. This is a good collection of sizes. You must not start off thinking that every #14, for instance, is the same identical size. Every manufacturer, for some strange reason, varies his sizes somewhat from other manufacturers. But the difference is slight and need not concern you. You will probably find that the #9 is the most needed of all.

The round brush is adaptable to many varied strokes and effects — especially when you use different sizes. One should be ever ready to change brushes to fit the need at hand. The general rule is—large brushes for large areas, medium sizes for smaller areas, small brushes for little areas, details and fine lines.
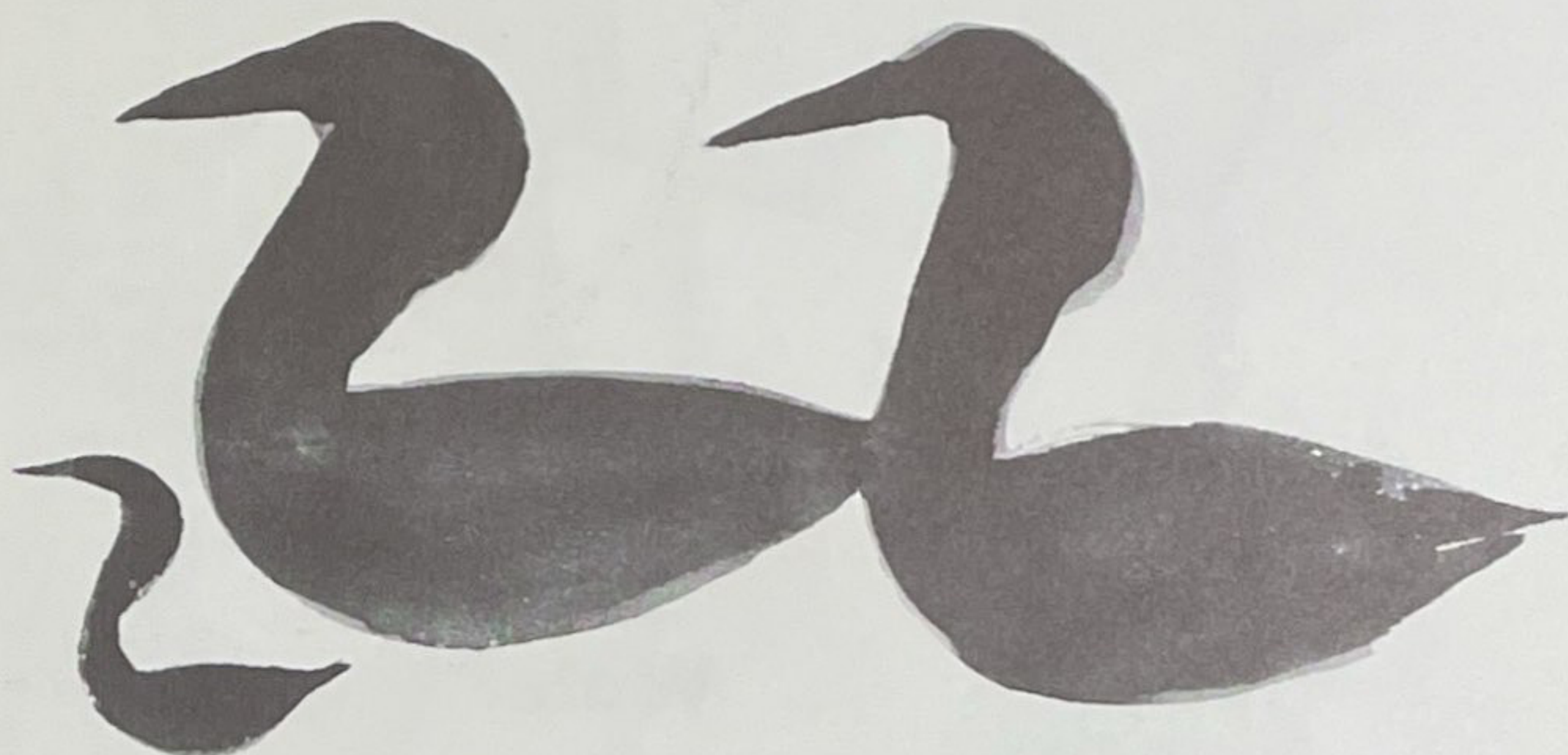
The adaptability of the round brush is demonstrated on these pages. All strokes are made with a wet brush on dry paper. With practice you can develop other strokes for yourself.

Do these with a smaller brush — held almost upright—with a downward stroke of the thumb and fingers.

Forms like these can be made with a single stroke of a well loaded brush. Start with the point moving horizontally at first, then swing it down under more pressure, reduce pressure slightly for the neck-like part, then turn and apply full pressure for the largest area — ending with the point of the brush. Big areas take big brushes; little brushes make small areas. This technique can be applied to other forms.

One might call this the push or "squiggle" stroke — made by pushing the brush up the paper in an irregular design.

These thin, wavy horizontal lines are made with a small brush under varying pressure.

Try analyzing this stroke yourself. It is started with the point — pressure increased, decreased and ended with the point as started.
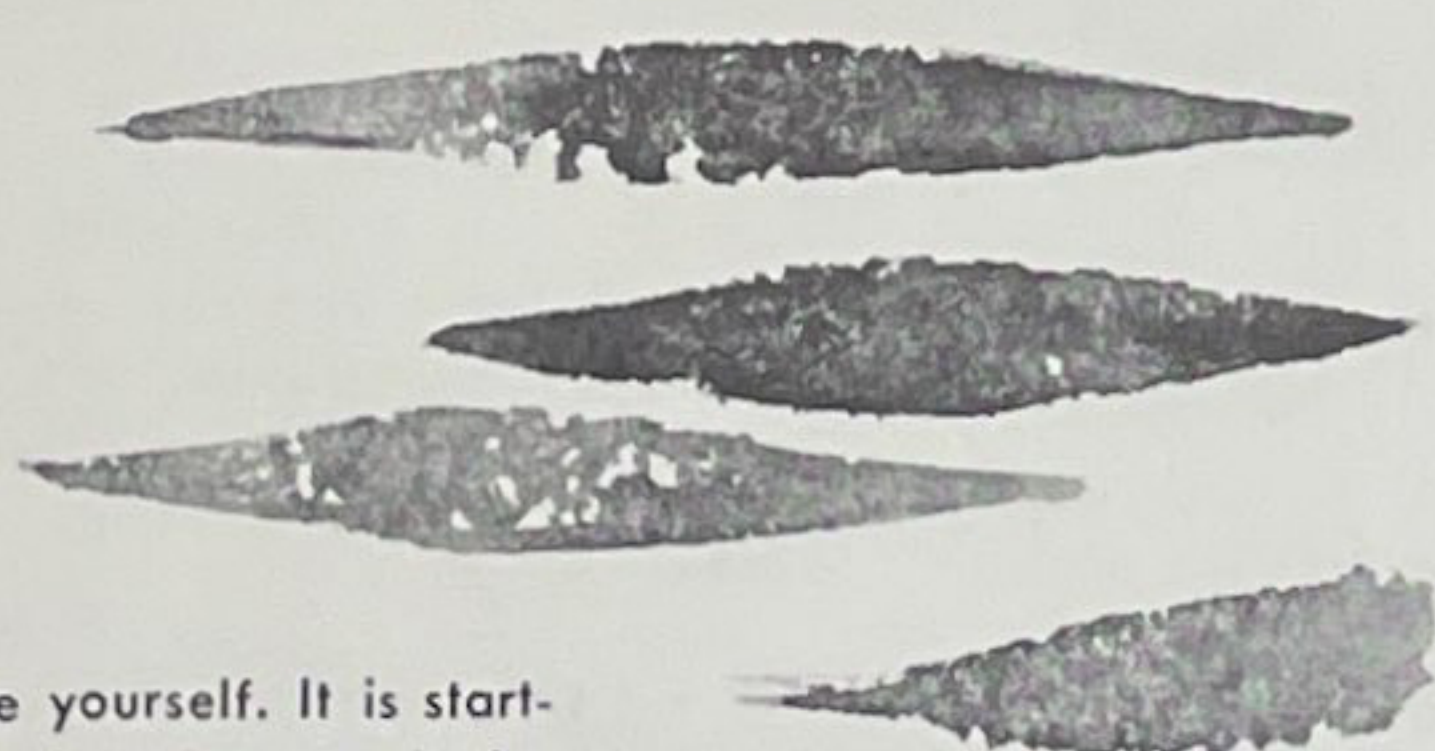
Here use a large brush well loaded with pigment; start with the point, swing down with increasing pressure, release, increase, release, increase and finish with a point.

Begin with the brush point, handle toward the right; keep it in that position and draw the full, wet brush down the paper. Finish in the reverse of your beginning — or stop without the pointed flourish.

How to hold the brush for most of your strokes is demonstrated above. Grasp the handle, as shown, so that your hand feels comfortable and relaxed — giving your thumb and fingers freedom to turn, twist and pull the brush in any desired direction, or to glibly change direction and position during a stroke.

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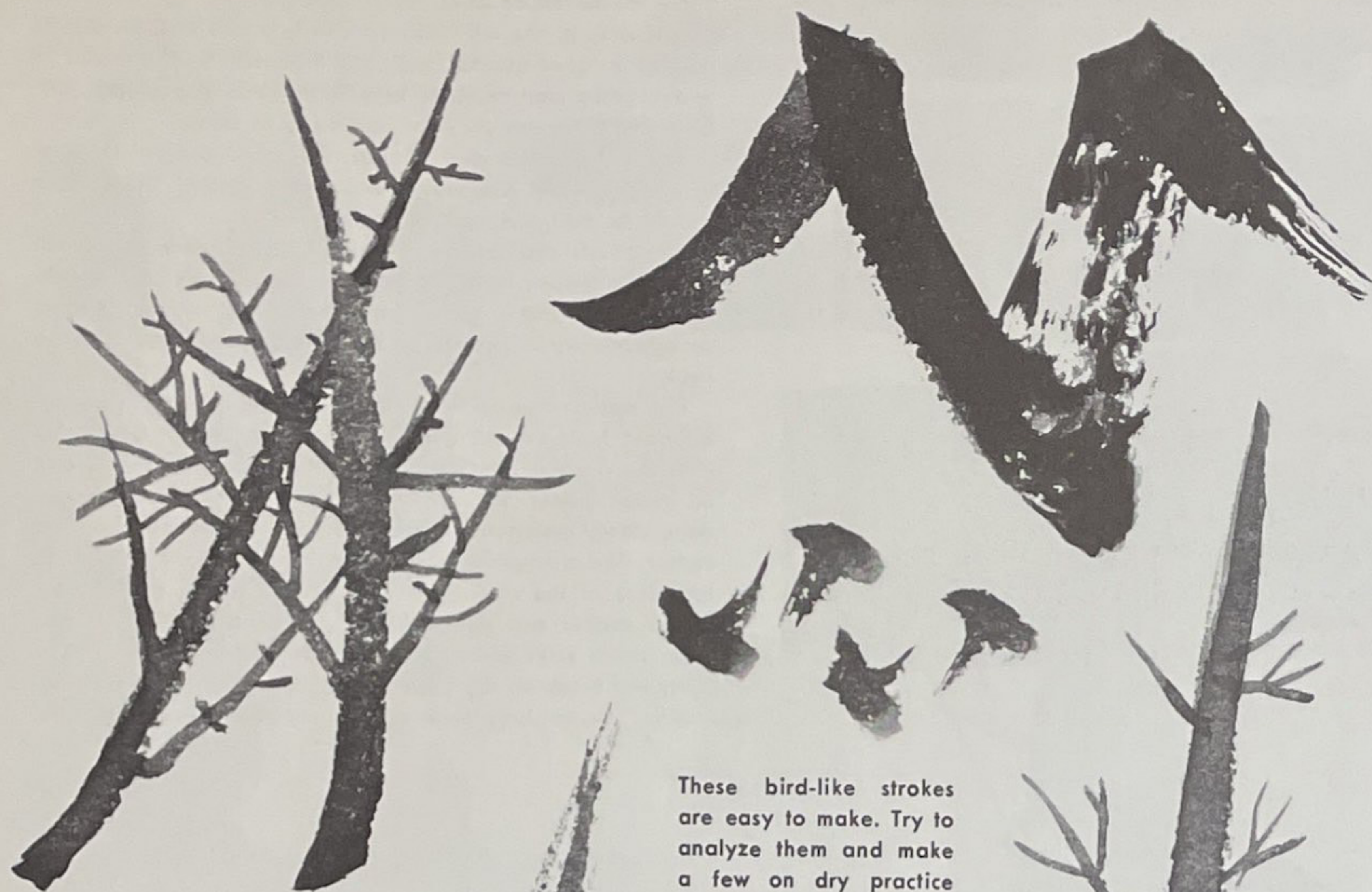
These bird forms are made in one continuous stroke, then some of the color is lifted out — as you see — with a partially dried brush.

These bird-like strokes are easy to make. Try to analyze them and make a few on dry practice paper. The little birds are quite wet. Note the soft edges in parts of them.

Use, say, a #7 round for the trunk of these twigs; start with the point and slight pressure—end with full pressure. The twig-tips can be made easily with the point of a #4 —or, if you are careful, with the point of the #7.
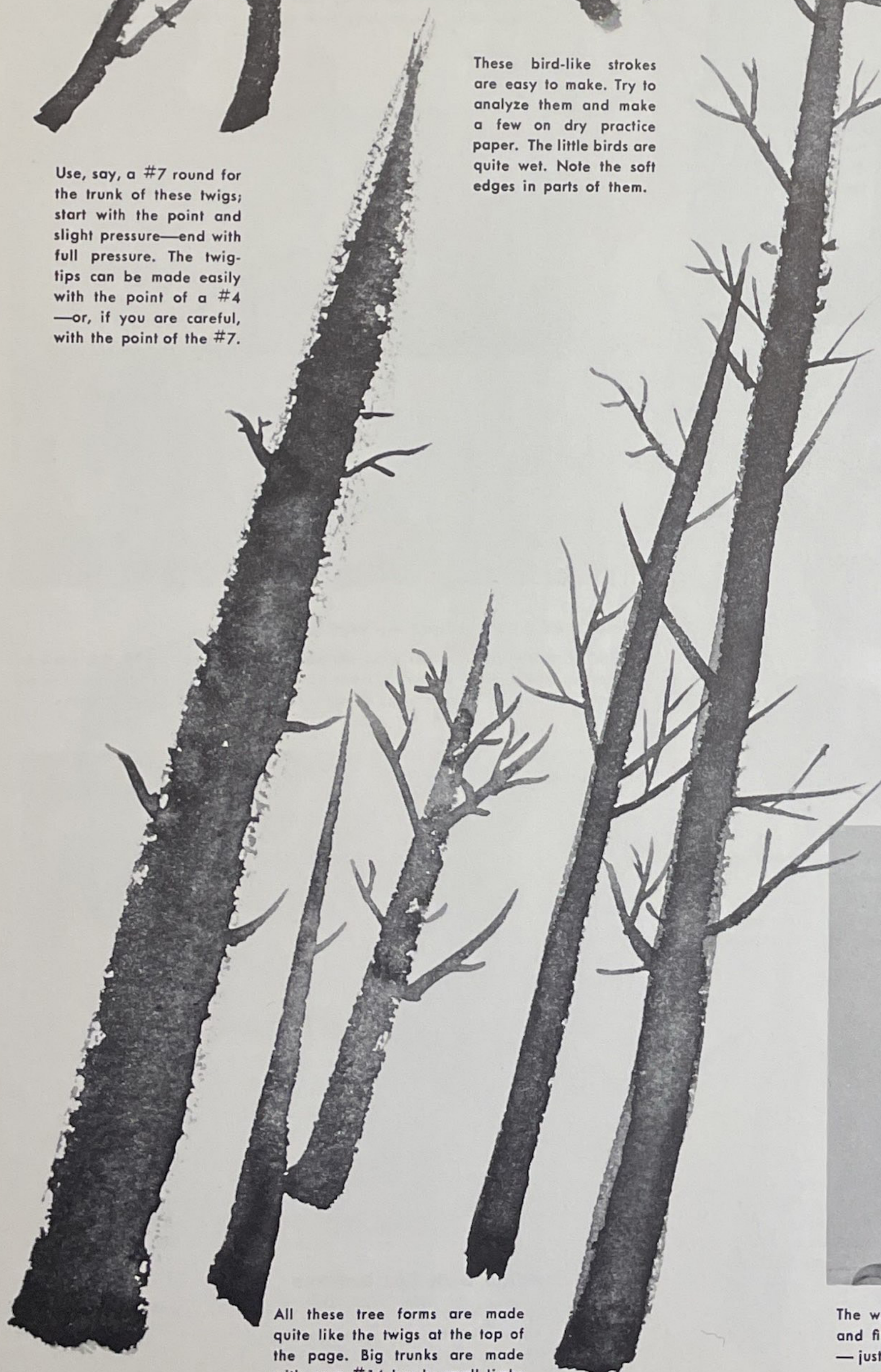
All these tree forms are made quite like the twigs at the top of the page. Big trunks are made with your #14 brush; small limbs are put in with a #7 or #4—according to your preference.

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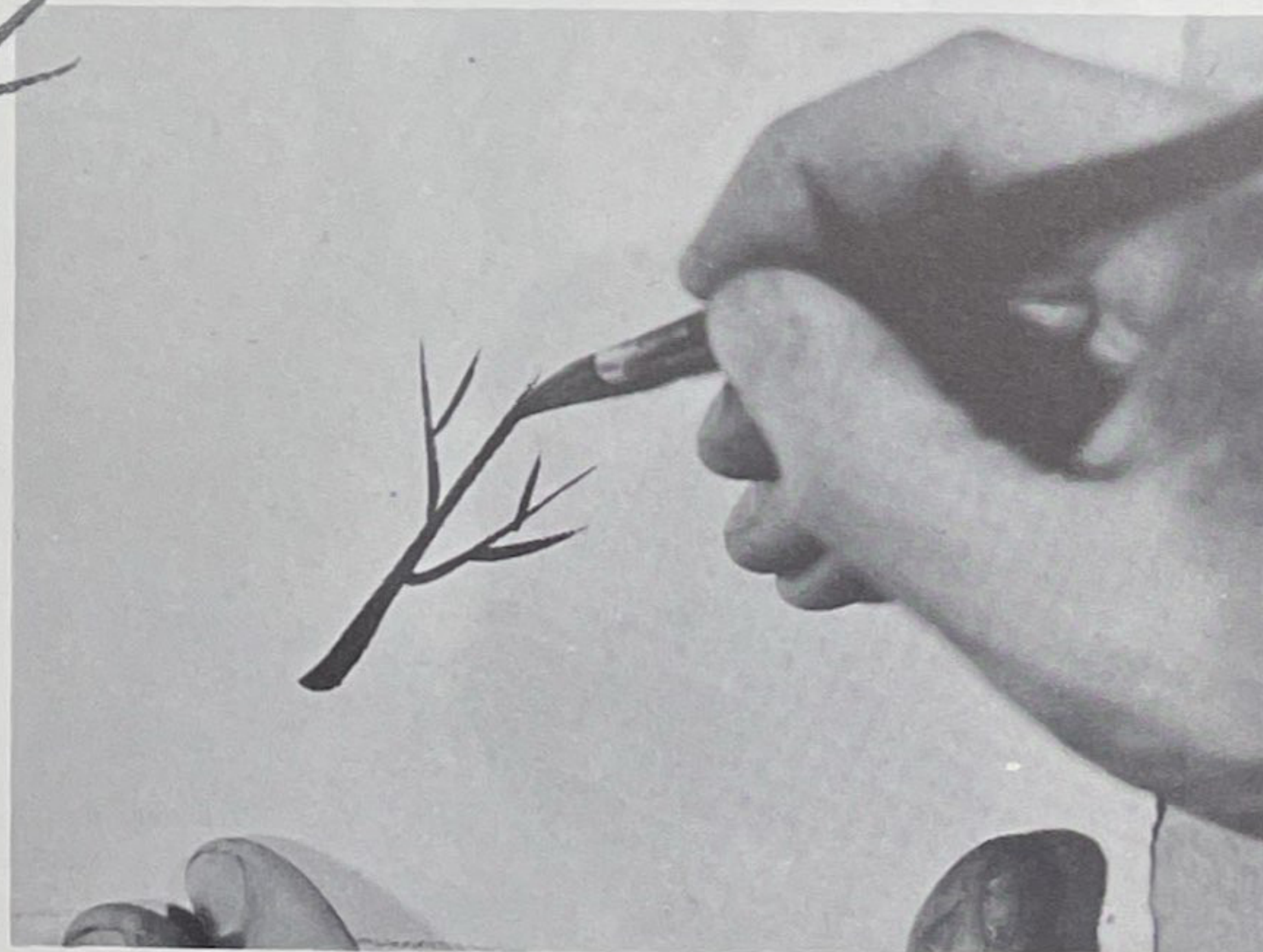
The way you hold your brush is important. It should be held so that your thumb and fingers can turn and manipulate it into any position that the stroke requires — just touching the paper for fine, twig-like lines, more pressure for wider lines.
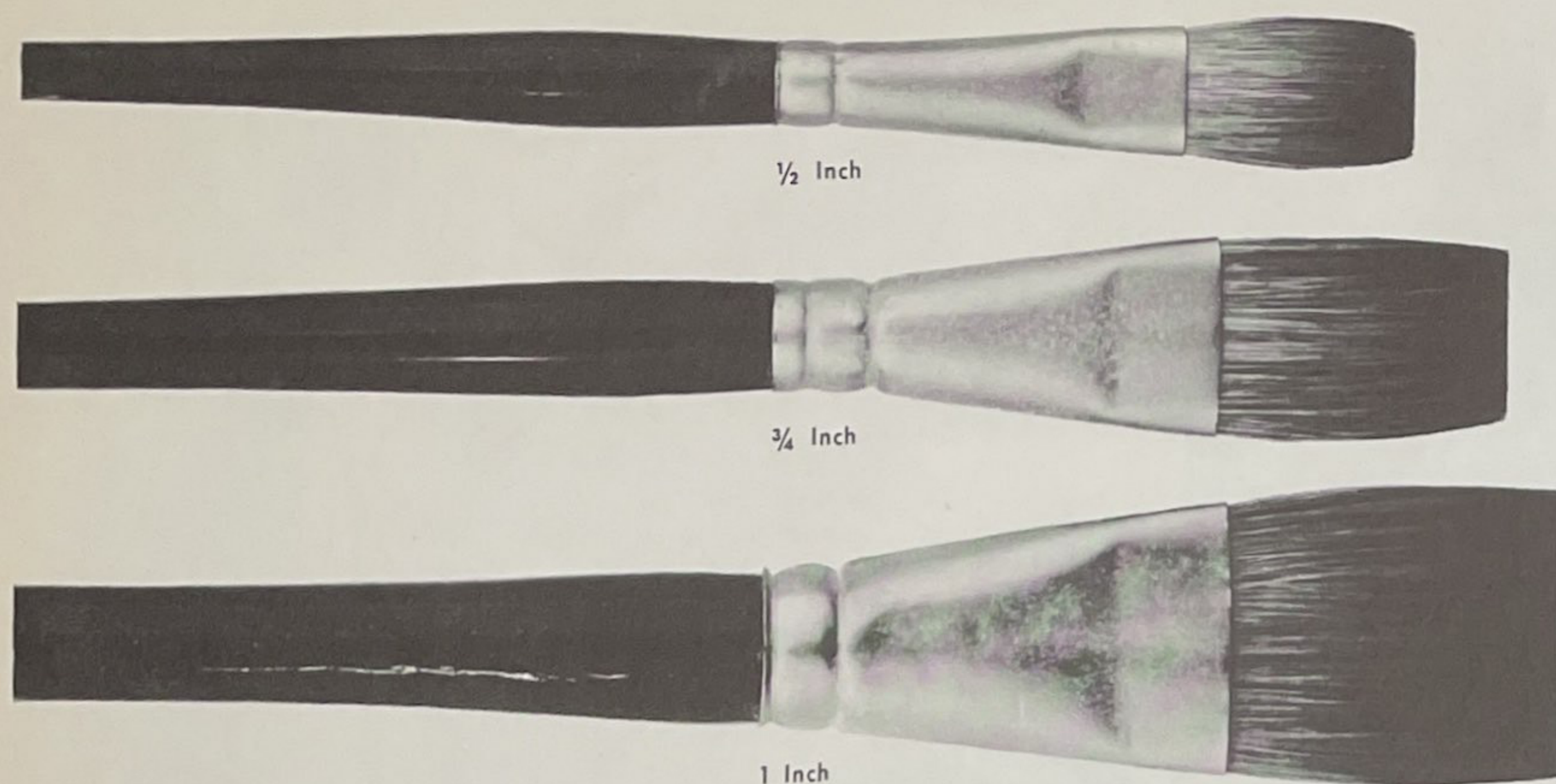
Flat brushes

The best flat water color brushes are made of red sable, the same as the round ones. Three popular sizes are shown, in actual size, at the left. The big one is a one-inch brush; the middle is three-quarter inch; the smallest, half-an-inch in width. Some start water color painting with the middle size, then add others as they feel the need of them.

Be sure to select good flat brushes and care for them as instructed in the previous round brush section. Good sable should be soft, yet springy — lively.

The effects you can get by skillful manipulation of the flat brush are legion. Hold the brush so that it feels comfortable in a relaxed grip — giving your thumb and two first fingers an opportunity to change its direction and position during a stroke.

The appearance of the stroke depends on a number of different factors — all of which you must control to end up with the desired effect. For example, a stroke done quickly on rough paper will look different than the same stroke done slowly on smooth paper — or on rough paper, for that matter. The amount of pigment in the brush will affect the the looks of the stroke, too. And so on. A few of the most useful strokes are demonstrated on these pages, with the three brush sizes pictured here. Each stroke is made with a fairly wet brush on dry paper of several textures. It would be well for you to study these strokes and practice making them.

½ Inch

¾ Inch

1 Inch

These strokes are made with the one-inch brush. Start with the corner of the thin edge and quickly reduce the angle of the brush to end up flat.

Solid circular areas of many sizes can be made with flat brushes by placing them perpendicular to the paper and giving them a complete turn.

These six strokes were made rapidly on rough paper. Start with the thin edge of the brush, stroke down and turn with a flourish of the flat side.

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### Hard and soft edges — wet on dry

You will find many occasions when the above stroke will be useful. It is made by pressing one side of the brush firmly to the paper with the other side raised slightly so that a "feather" edge appears on one side of the finished stroke.
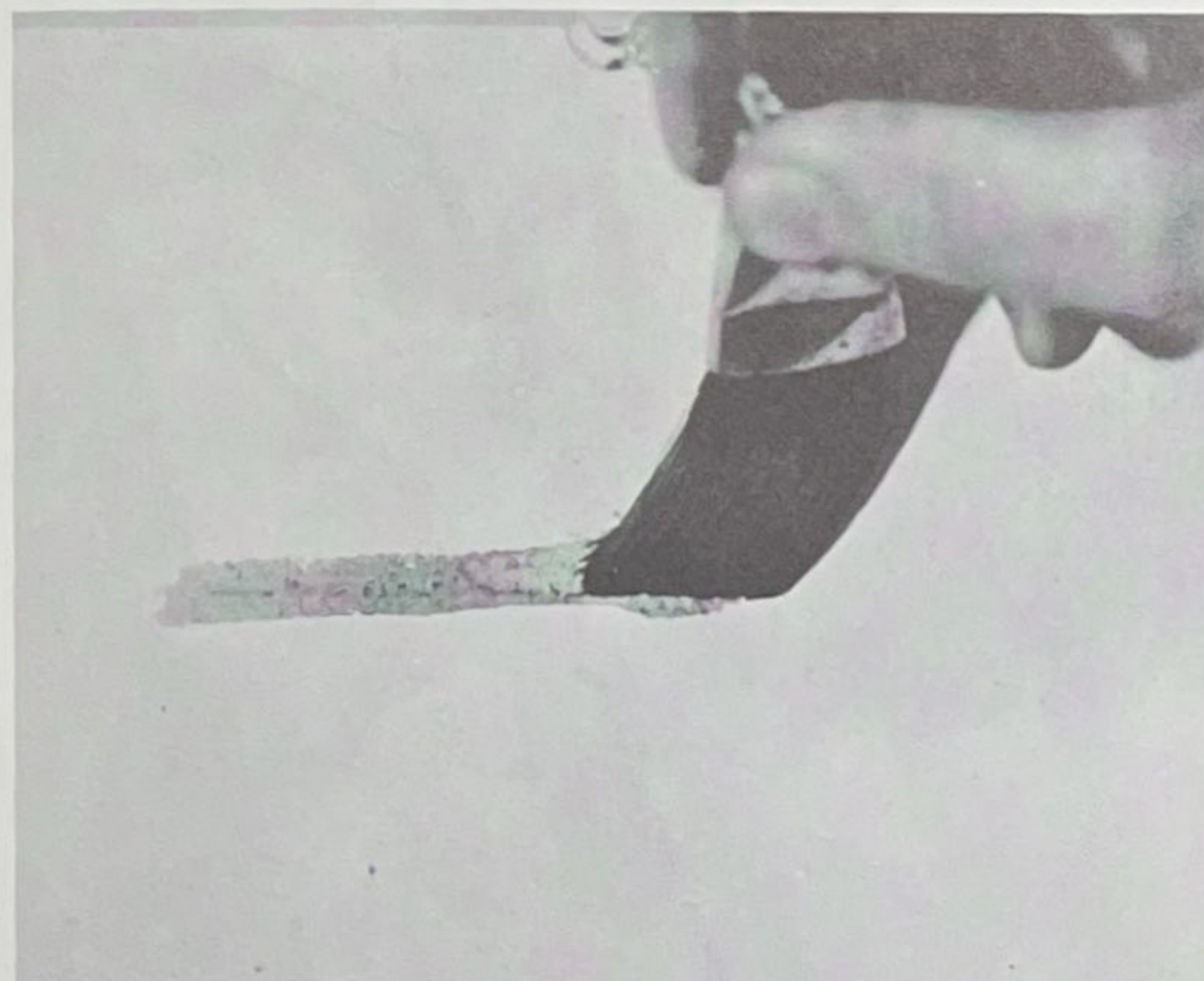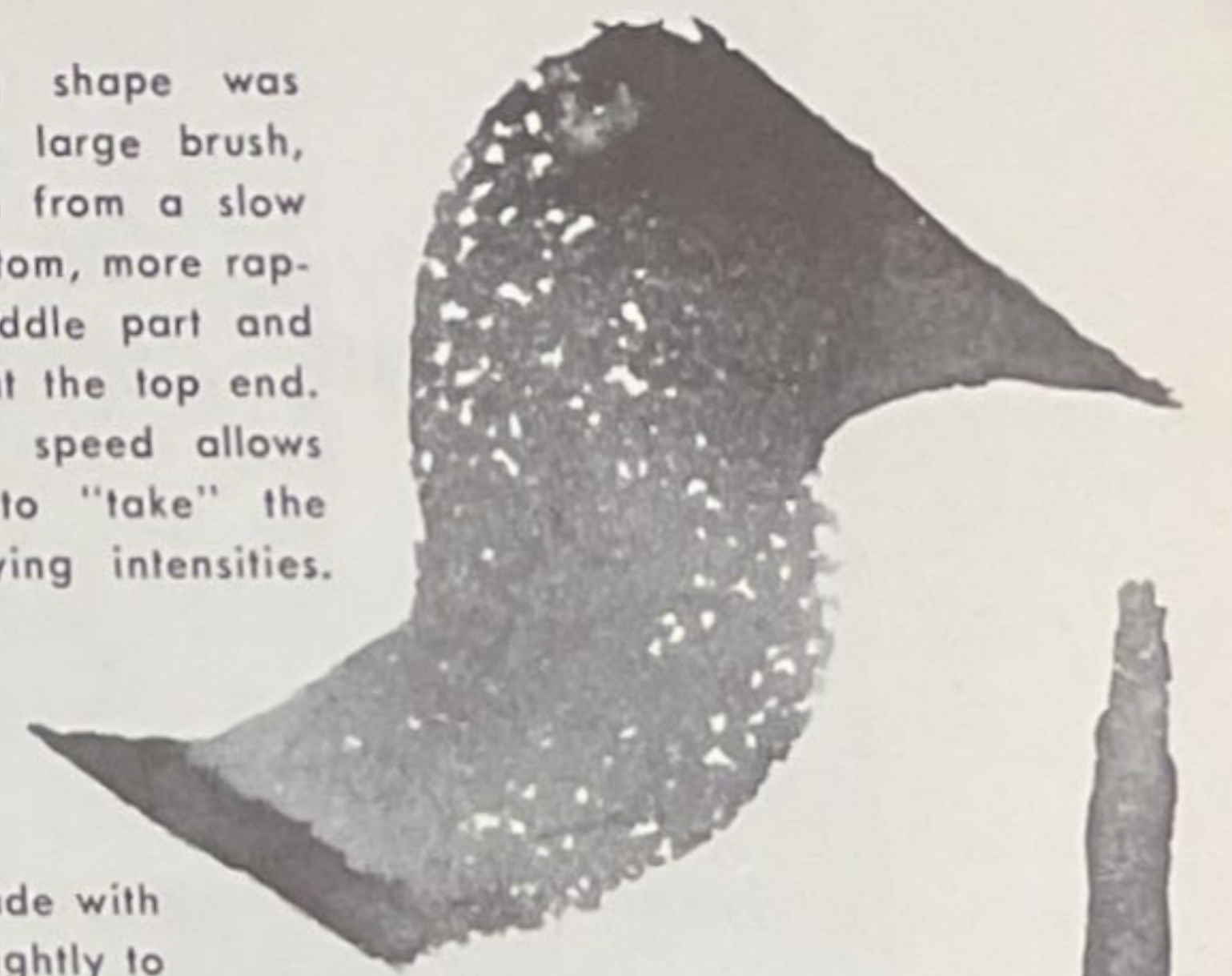
Thin strokes with flat brushes

The above shows how you can make thin, straight strokes with flat brushes. Using the edge without angle or with different angles, you can get many pleasing variations — from the sharp pointed chisel effects to the simple, straight, thinnest stroke possible with the entire edge touched gently to the paper.

These strokes demonstrate a variety of effects that you can get by using more or less water or pigment—and by working slowly or rapidly.
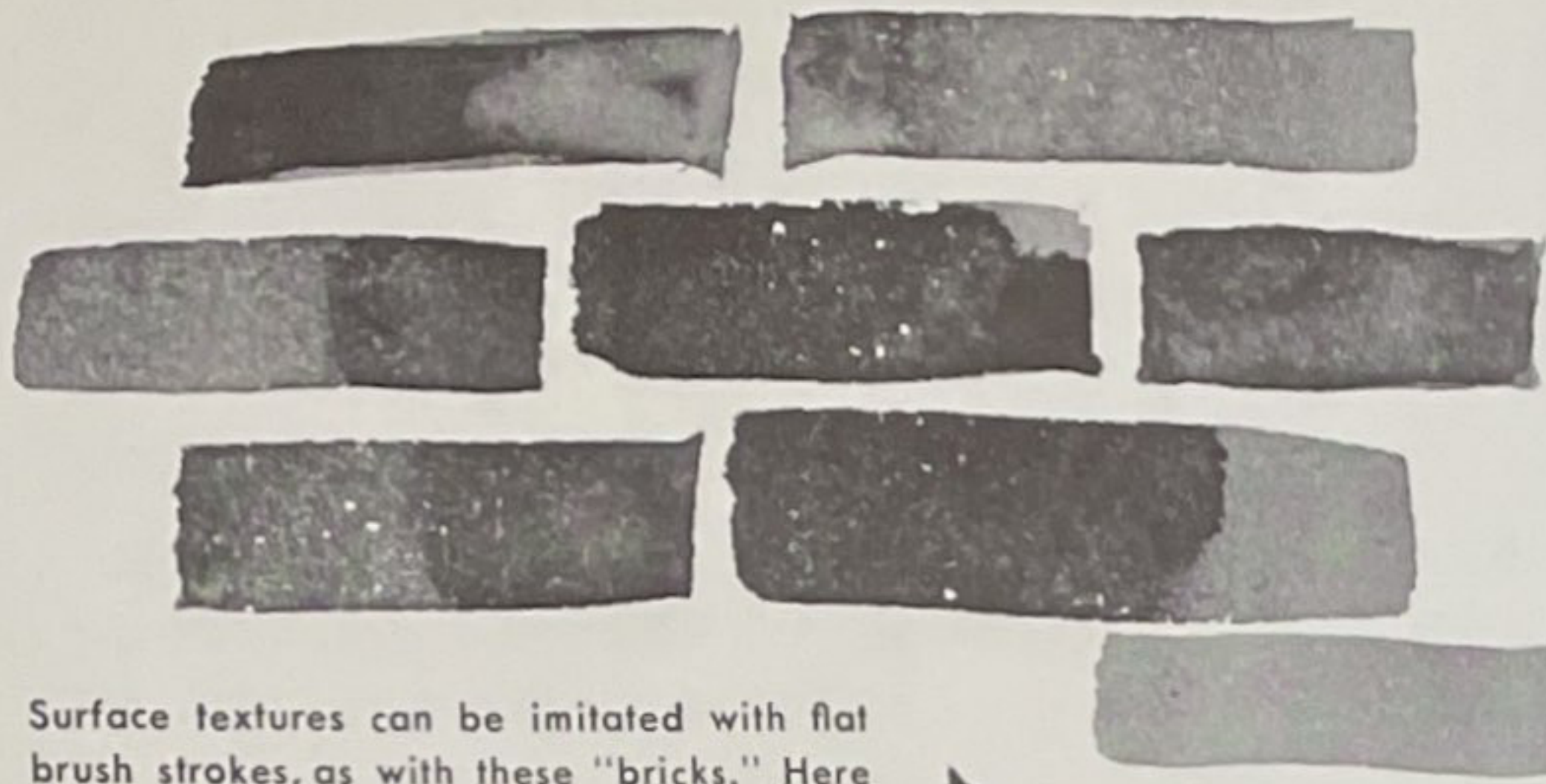
Surface textures can be imitated with flat brush strokes, as with these "bricks." Here again, varying degrees of wetness and speed were employed with the small brush.

This interesting shape was made with the large brush, stroked through from a slow start at the bottom, more rapidly in the middle part and slowed down at the top end. This changing speed allows the pigment to "take" the paper in varying intensities.

The six thin strokes below were made with the smallest brush edge, angled slightly to begin and end with a sharp point. The two larger strokes were made with larger brushes, started thin and widened by turning the brush gradually from start to finish.
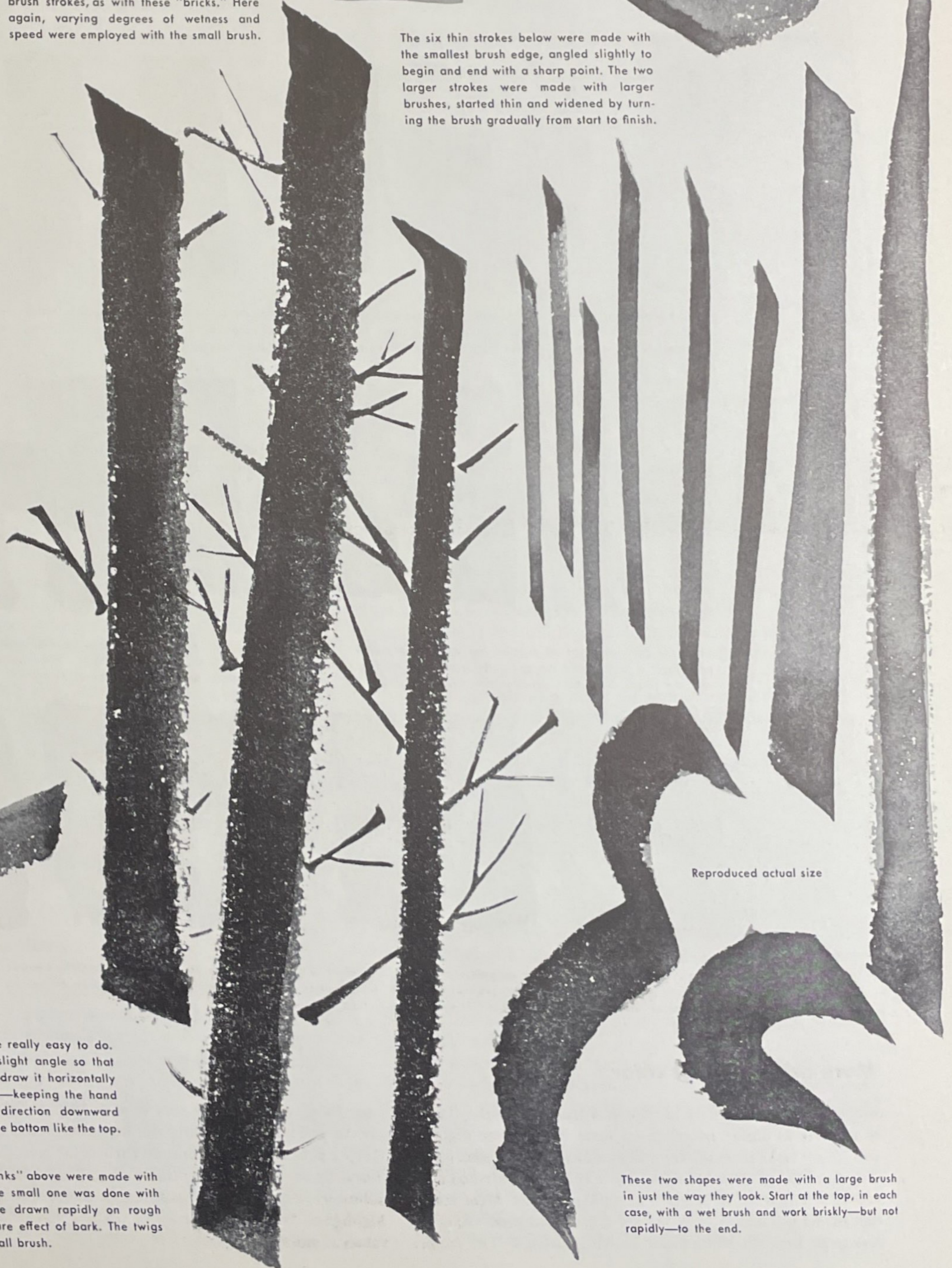
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These "Z's" look difficult but are really easy to do. Hold the small flat brush at a slight angle so that its full side touches the paper—draw it horizontally for the top part. Now stop and—keeping the hand at the same angle—change direction downward with the thin edge and finish the bottom like the top.

The two larger "tree trunks" above were made with the one-inch brush; the small one was done with the half-inch. All were drawn rapidly on rough paper to get the texture effect of bark. The twigs were made with a small brush.

These two shapes were made with a large brush in just the way they look. Start at the top, in each case, with a wet brush and work briskly—but not rapidly—to the end.

## A study to show how water colors react with different handling

In all three of the demonstrations below, the same colors were used in identical positions throughout. From left to right they are cadmium yellow, cadmium orange, cadmium red, alizarin crimson, burnt sienna, Hooker's green, Prussian blue, ultramarine blue and black. They are laid out in the palette on page 11 just the same way.

| Cadmium yellow | Cadmium orange | Cadmium red | Alizarin crimson | Burnt sienna | | Hooker's green | Prussian blue | Ultramarine blue | Black |
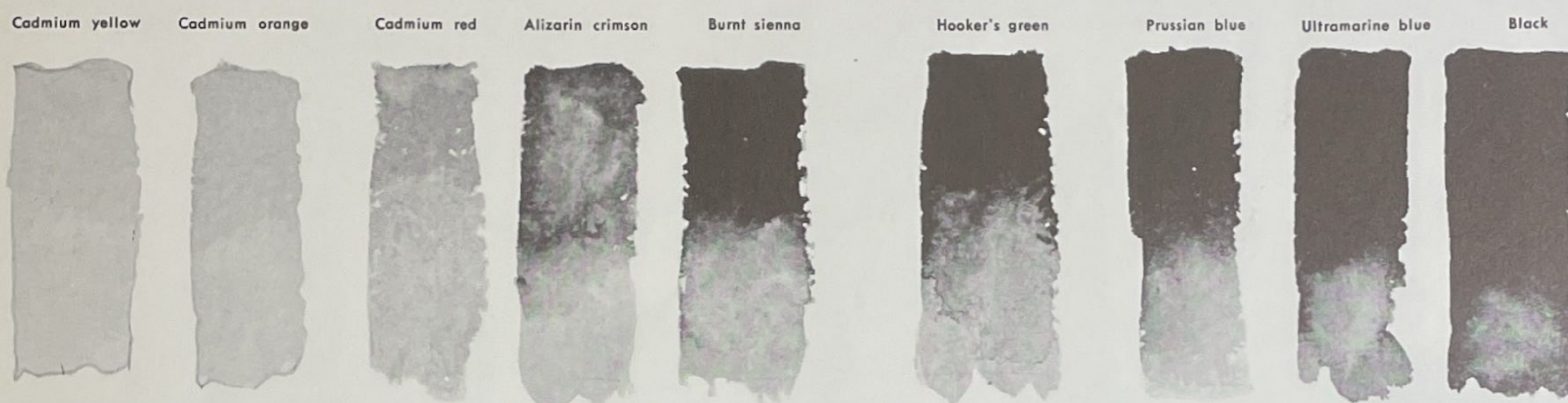
A The upper part of each of the nine color swatches above is made with the color in full intensity, while the lower part is more diluted with water. Notice that the lightest colors allow most of the white of the paper to show through, whereas the darker colors have increasingly more covering power; black is the most intense of all.
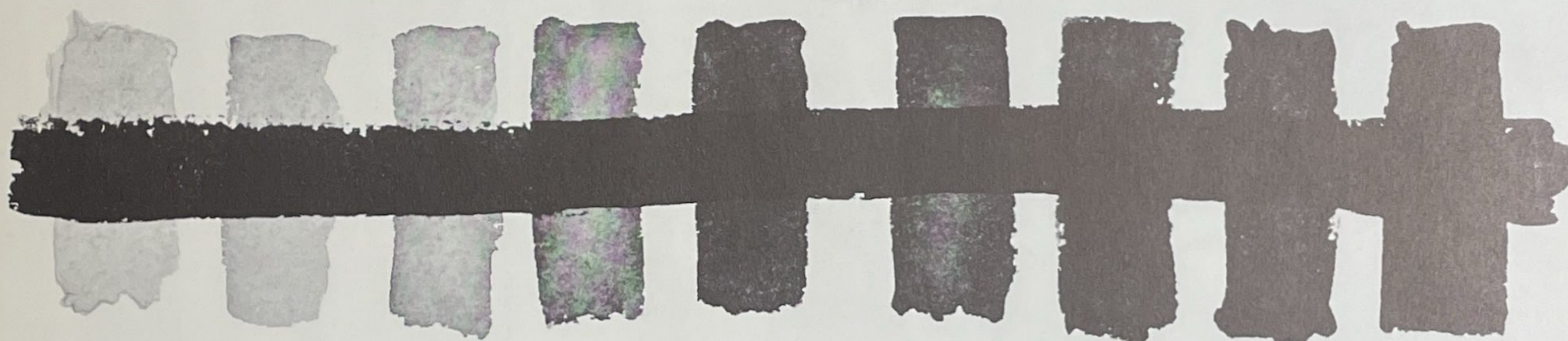
B You may put one layer of pigment on another, provided each layer is darker than the one underneath. Observe how well the single, long dark stroke above covers all degrees of color intensity. It will interest you to try duplicating this simple exercise with the colors listed above. We suggest that the dark over-stroke be made with one of your blues.
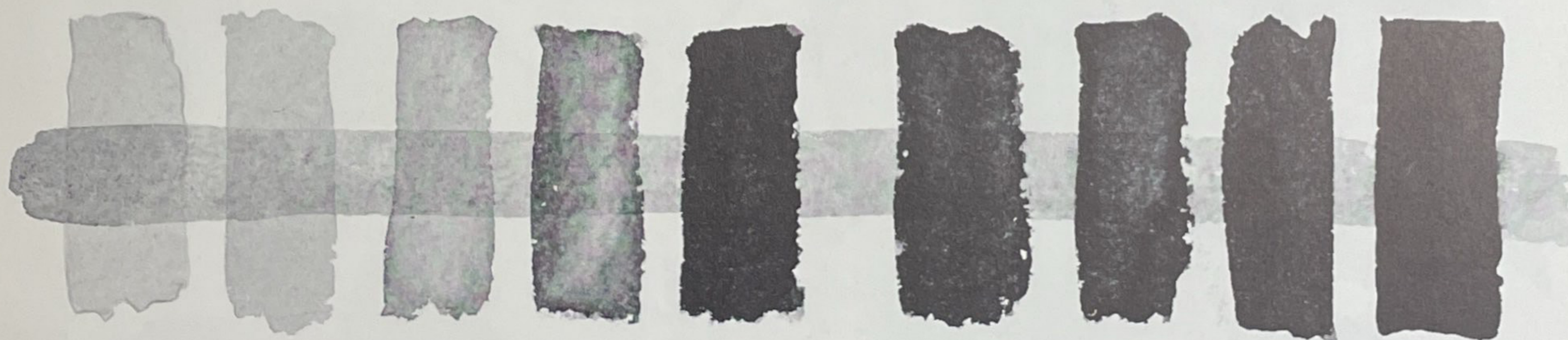
C This demonstrates how muddy effects may be secured from painting light pigments over those which are darker. Notice that the darker layers show through, thus killing the full effect of the lighter stroke. Do as above and try this exercise. In making this demonstration we used cadmium orange for our straight-across stroke.

Reproduced actual size

More advice about color

Colors can only be as dark as they look in tube or cake. To try to make them darker by piling on more of the same pigment will simply make them thicker and muddier. When darker tones are required, one must use darker *pure* colors or learn to make new colors from a combination of dark pigments. Most water colorists do not use white. White areas and all degrees of lightness result from the white paper showing through. The paper also brings out the brilliancy of such bright, light-bodied colors as the yellows, oranges and the more fiery reds. A few painters keep a tube of opaque white in their color box—Chinese white—but only use it on rare occasions when they want to bring to absolute whiteness small areas here and there, such as accents and highlights. We suggest that you use the paper for your light values as much as possible.
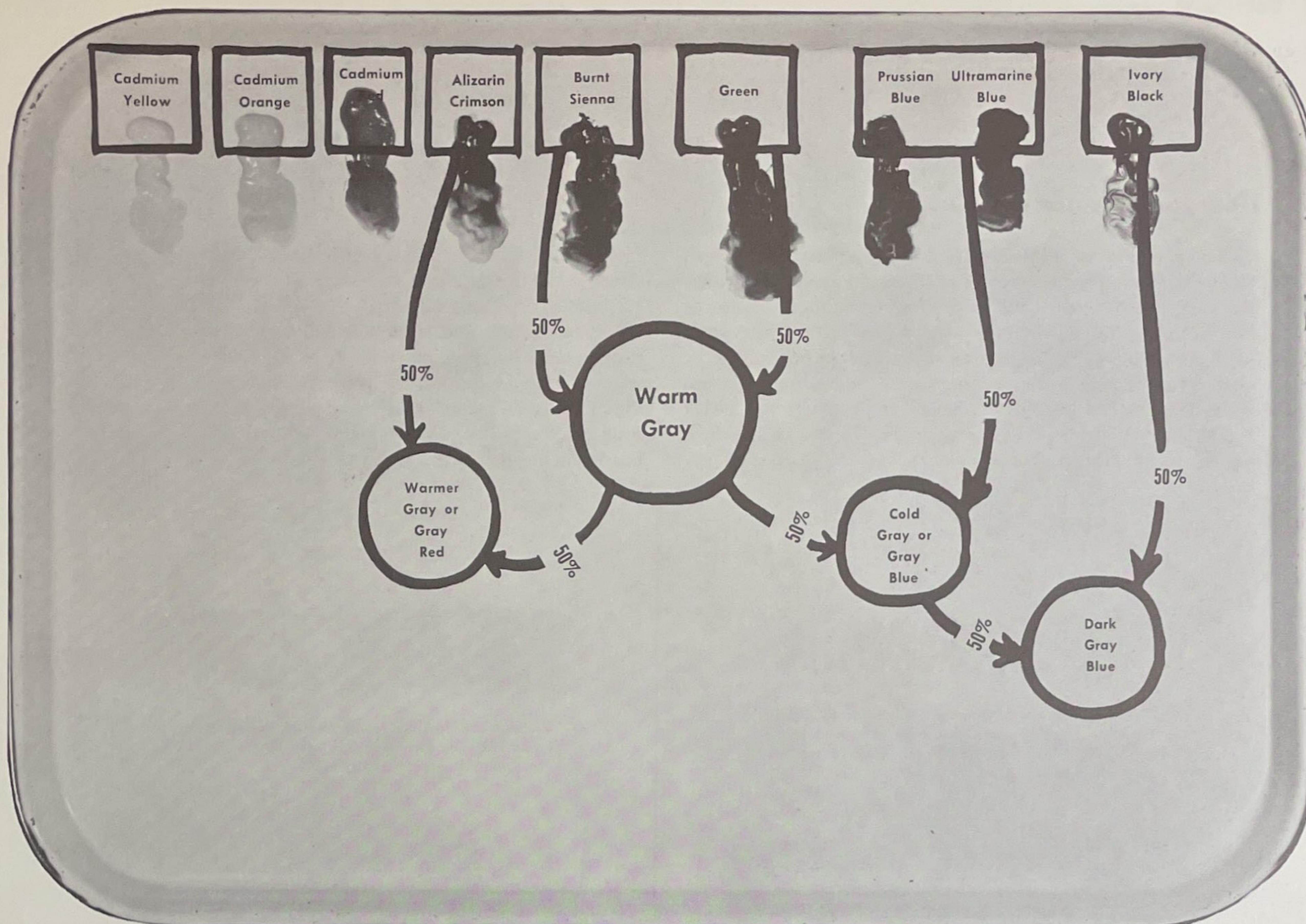
The water color palette

The term "palette" has two meanings among artists. It is used to denote the flat surface upon which paints are placed and mixed — as the butcher's tray above — or as a name for the entire collection of colors a painter uses — as you see arranged on the tray.

One should get along with just as few colors in his palette as possible in the beginning. The nine colors above will give you most every conceivable effect needed in good painting.

Arrange your colors, as shown, and always keep them in that order, with the degrees of darkness progressing from left to right. You will find this to be the most convenient and efficient order in which to use them. Place your colors far enough apart so that they will not run together as you mix them. Tilt your mixing surface slightly so that the water will run down and away from your paints.

How to mix colors

The color range of the above palette, from left to right is — cadmium yellow, cadmium orange, cadmium red, alizarin crimson, burnt sienna, Hooker's green, Prussian blue, ultramarine blue and black. These may be used in pure strength, lightened with water or intermixed in a myriad of combinations for thousands of hues, values and intensities.

A few of the most needed grays are mixed as shown diagrammatically on the mixing tray above. To learn how to arrive at most any conceivable color from a mixture of two or more of your palette pigments and water, you should refer back to pages 2-30 in Section 2 of the course. You will find most especially helpful the color wheel on page 2. This circular arrangement of interblended pure colors, together with the text beneath and the crossing lines — indicating many opposing pairs of colors that will make gray when mixed — should be extremely useful in the early stages of your painting. The fact that this color wheel was made with oil colors need not concern you; the same principles of color mixing with oil paint apply with water color — the only difference being that in oil painting, white paint is used, whereas none is normally used with water color.

You will see that the above palette contains two reds and two blues. Each color within the two pairs is different from the other. The cadmium red is a warm red — has a little yellow in it — whereas the alizarin crimson has a bluish cast and is cool. The Prussian blue is a violent "electric" blue of great coldness. Some call it a "bitter" blue. The ultramarine, on the other hand, is a bit on the violet side and has more warmth.

A few words of caution: to add a gray tone to the lighter pigments, such as yellow, orange or red, it is better to add a warm gray instead of black, which has a tendency to dull these more delicate colors. Also, avoid using black full strength, since this will make a harsh note in any part of your picture. Always thin it out with water and add a little color to it — even in painting a "black" wall.

Burnt sienna is a rich, earth pigment and is very brilliant if put on once and not worked over. If you paint more of it over your first application, you are likely to make the area look thick or muddy.

Colors should be mixed thoroughly on the palette before using them. Try to mix more than you need, to be safe. Since it is difficult to judge the true mixed color on the palette, we suggest that you keep a piece of white paper handy and try your mixture on it first to judge the trueness of the color when dry.

How to use color with water

Let us first grow to understand a few simple terms that will often recur in the following pages of this section on water color. Since the tonal values of the medium depend upon the degree in which the white paper is allowed to show through the work, we must carefully gauge and control the amount of water to be used in our brushes — (1) much water for lighter tones, (2) less water for medium tones, (3) almost pure pigment for darker paintings and (4) practically pure pigment for the darkest areas where none of the paper is to show through.

Water colorists describe a brush, poised, ready for painting, under the above conditions as being (1) "very wet," (2) "wet," (3) "almost dry," and (4) "dry."

As you practice and learn you will be able to get many and varied effects by applying your brush filled with these different water and pigment mixtures. We now demonstrate a number of the more useful combinations you can get by using your brush from (1) "very wet" to (4) "dry." We will use a medium-size brush and any dark pigment.

Dry paper	Wet paper

This stroke we call "dry-on-dry." It is made by drawing the brush — holding very little water and plenty of pigment — quickly across dry paper. Observe the flaky texture it has.

With a dry brush and pigment we get this effect on paper that has been previously wet. See how the paint bleeds out into the wetness at the edges.

Here again we use dry paper — but the brush is full of water and pigment. This gives us texture only at the edges. Dry paper makes the paint hold its position.
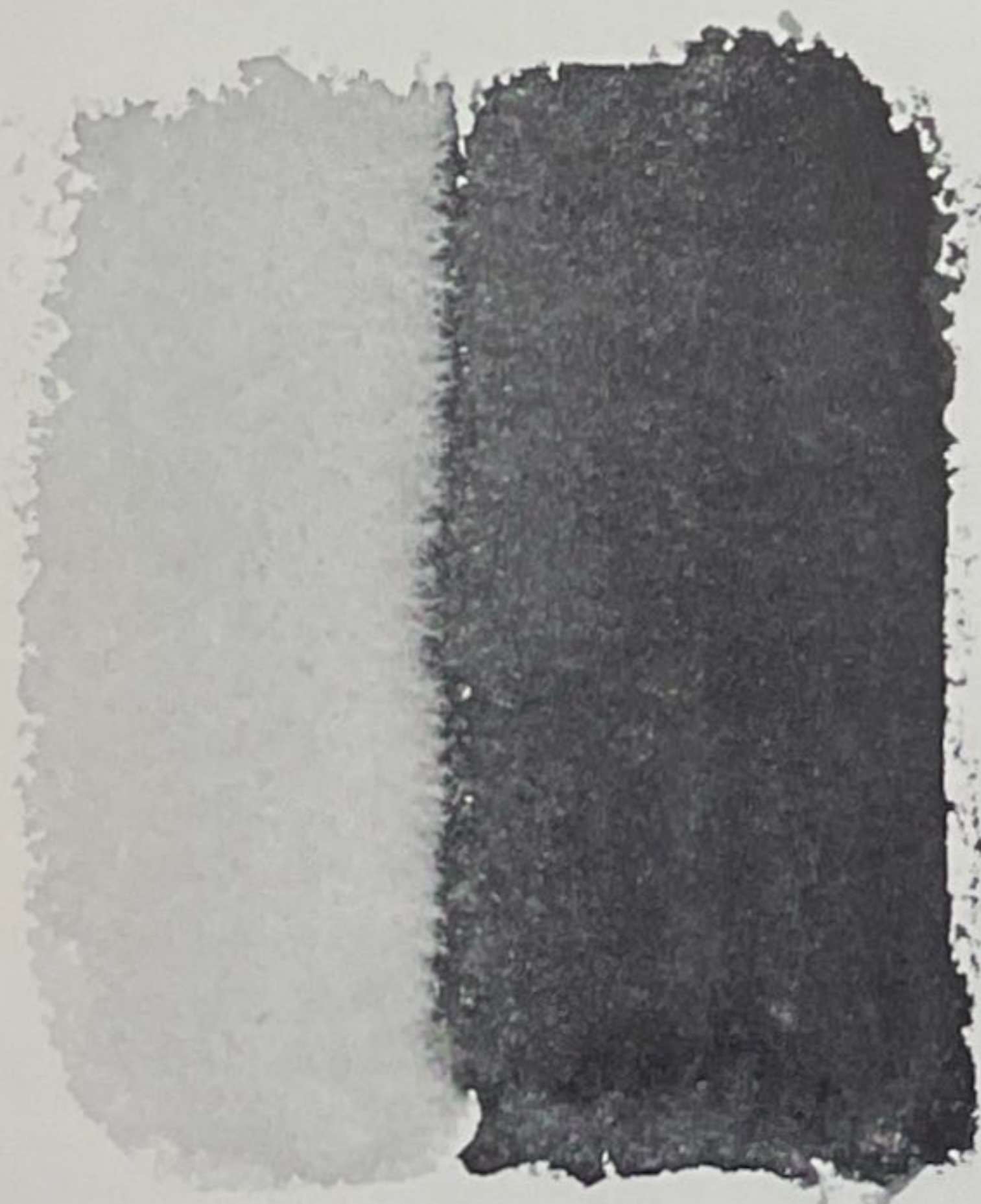
A very wet brush, with pigment, on very wet paper gives us the above feathered-out-blended-edge area.

A good way to make the edges of two wet colors blend nicely is to paint the first one quite wet, then place the other less wet color so that their edges touch. This will cause the first stroke's wetness to soak in some of the color of the second.

If you want a very soft blended edge on one side of a stroke, lap it over a previously well wet area.

If soft edges are required around an area of color, circle it with wetness and paint from the dry center part out into the wet.

Reproduced actual size

1 Here, in three steps, we demonstrate a special effect that can prove very helpful to you. It is a dry-over-wet technique. First we quickly wash an area with a wet brush holding dark pigment.

2 While it is drying for a few seconds, clean the brush and fill it with dark pigment, then paint over the area in the shape and size desired.
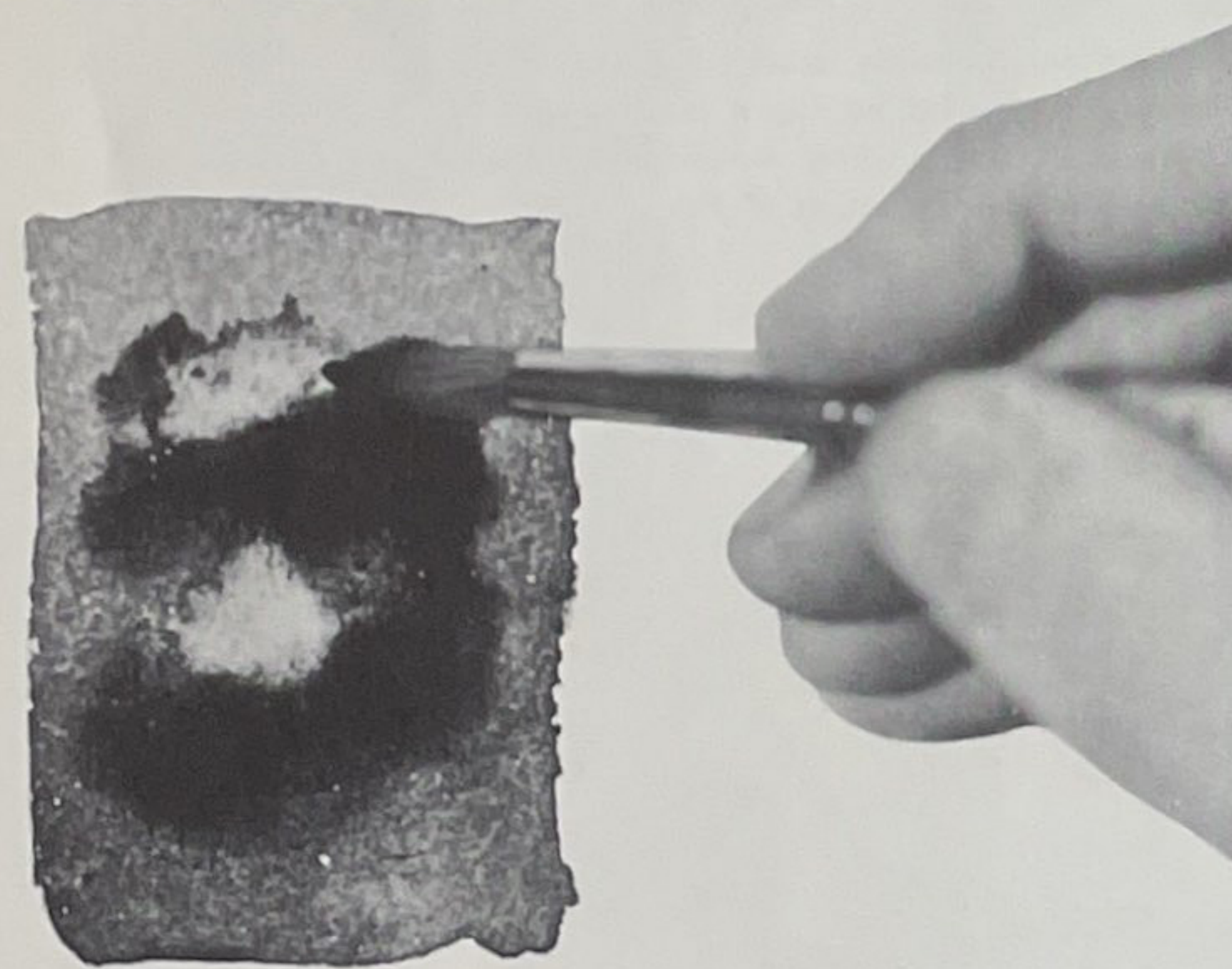
3 This in turn is allowed to dry some, then clear water is dropped from the brush over the spots that we want to lighten. When the water begins to open the pigment, forming small rings, blot out the color with a dry brush. Just apply the point quickly and it will absorb the water.

This demonstrates a way to grade a wash from dark to light to get a soft, blended edge. First, put down a stroke of fairly dry pigment on dry paper. Then dilute the pigment in the brush by adding a little water and make a stroke that washes the dry edge of the first stroke into wet. Last, clean the pigment out of the brush and make a wet stroke upward into the darker area.

Painting an apple — in three steps
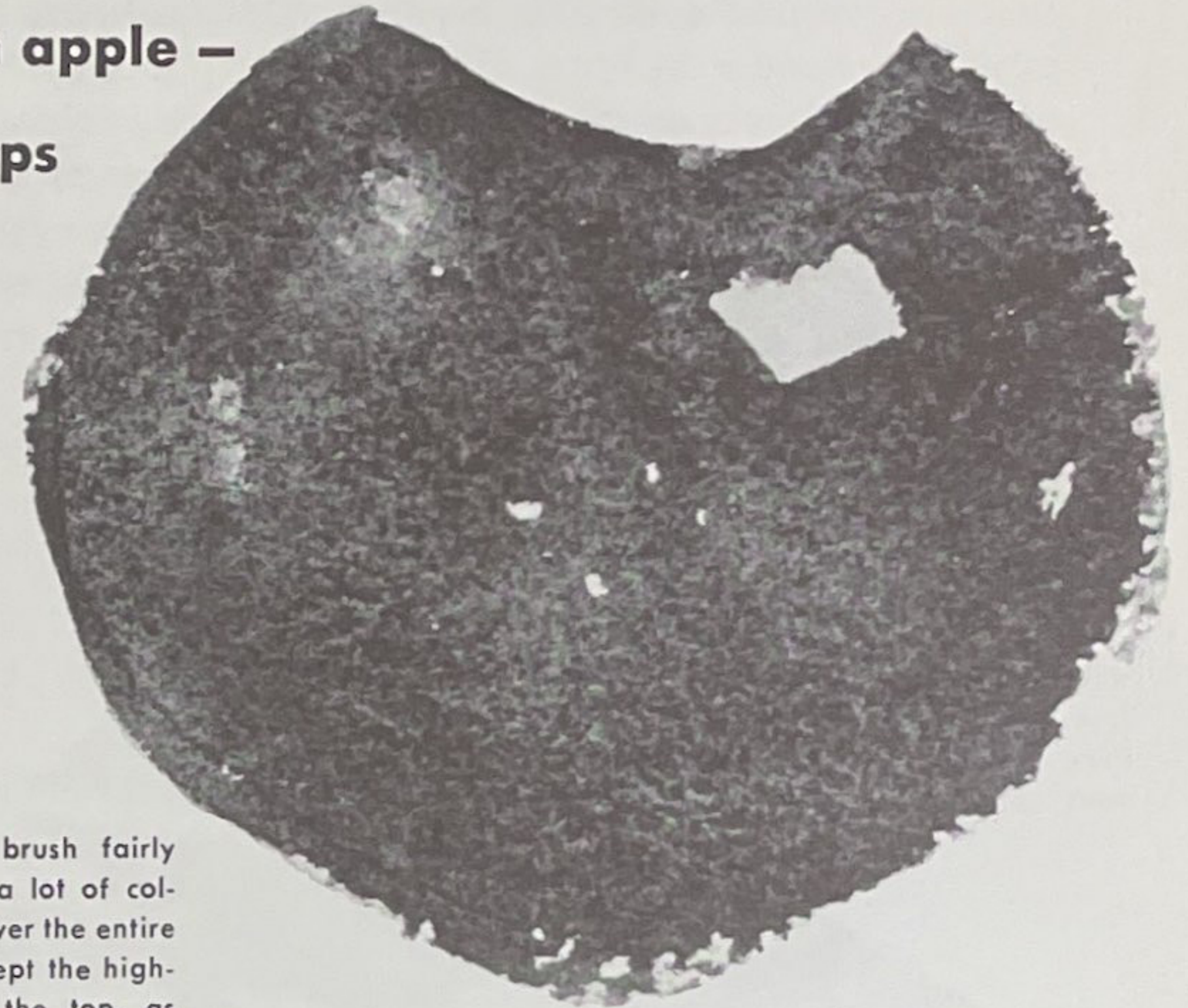
1 Using a large brush fairly wet, filled with a lot of color, go quickly over the entire apple area, except the highlight spot and the top, as shown. Let dry for a moment.
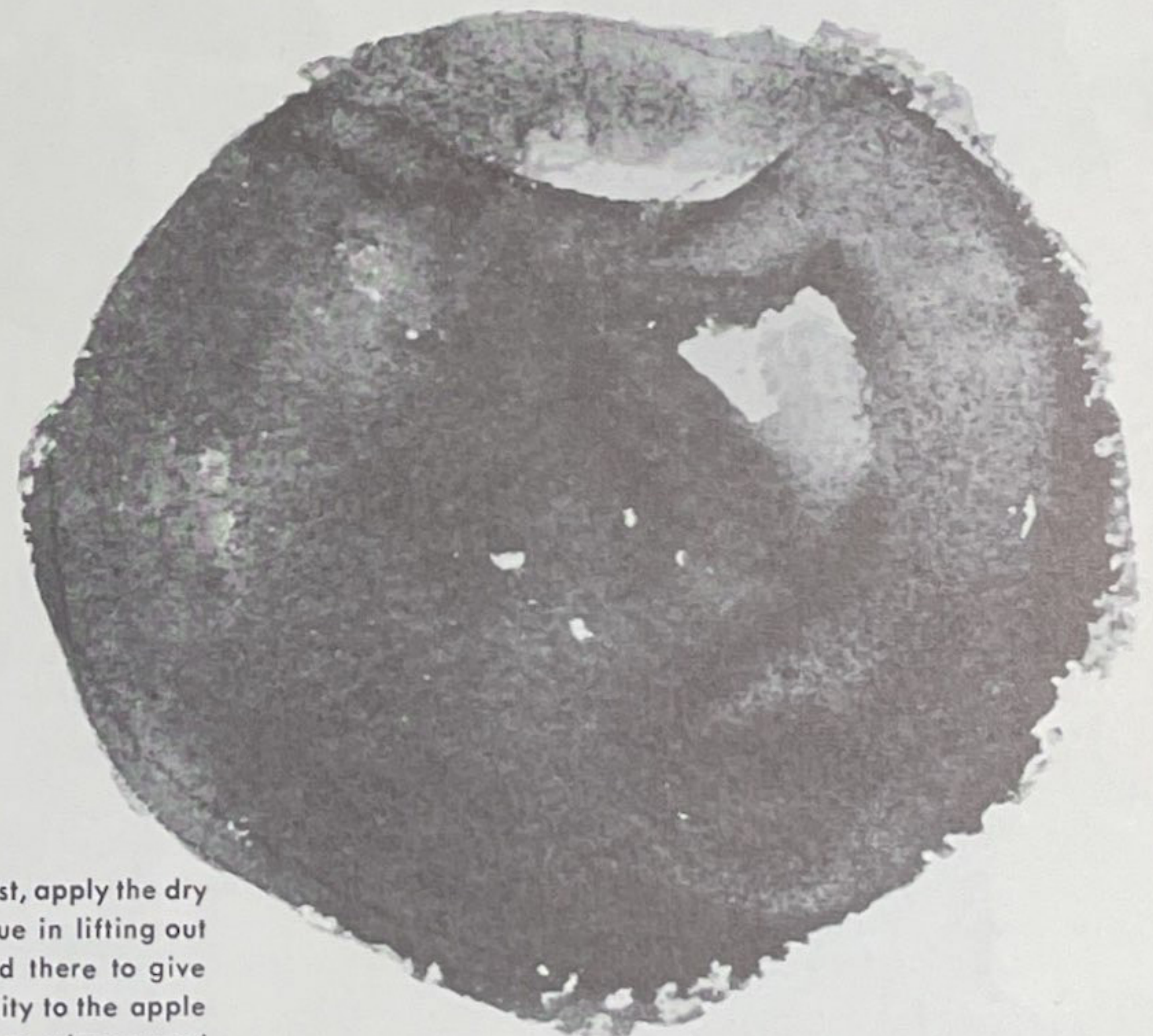
2 When still moist, apply the dry brush technique in lifting out color here and there to give form and reality to the apple and add deeper color around the lower left edge, to make it look round. Place a light, graded wash at the top of the apple — as shown.
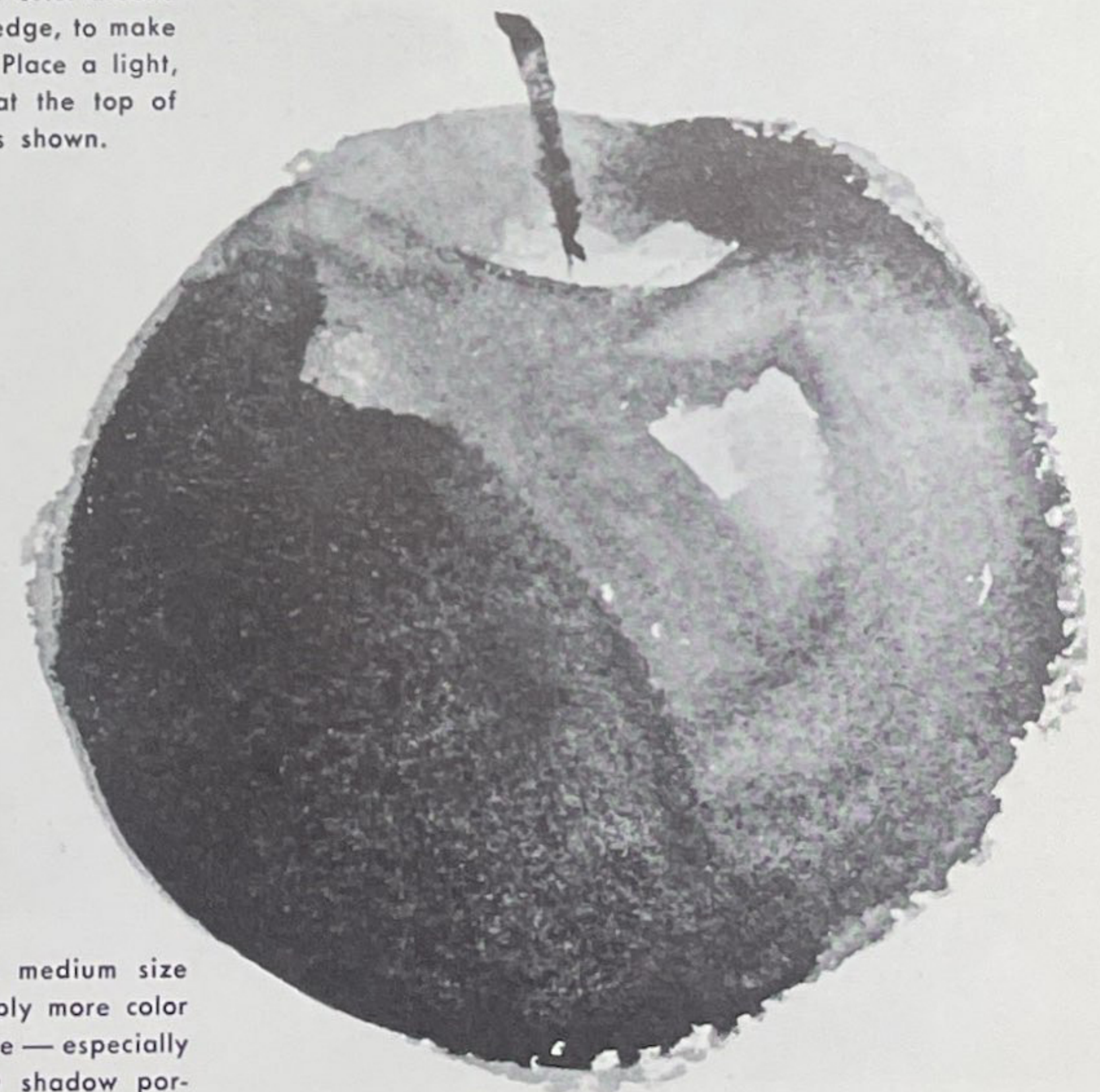
3 Now select a medium size brush and apply more color here and there — especially the lower left shadow portion. Wait until it completely dries, then paint the stem with a quick, fresh stroke.

Reproduced actual size

Other ways to control water color

The alert water colorist soon learns the niceties of technique that are possible within the medium. Do not hesitate to use other tools besides the brush, if these will help you more quickly get the end result that you are after. There is nothing in the rules that says you must work with brush and paper alone. Our goal is to get the pigment on the paper so that we may paint the most perfect picture by the easiest and most effective means.

On these pages we demonstrate a few useful ways to control water color. It would be well for you to practice doing these as described. Then, as you progress and experiment, you will discover other effective techniques of your own.

To get this effect, quickly paint the whole area with a medium sized brush that holds quite a wet mixture of water and pigment. After it has settled a few seconds, use the same brush, slightly moist, and blot out most of the wash. Then, with the same brush, well loaded with any dark pigment, paint the dark area and let it "bleed" into the background.
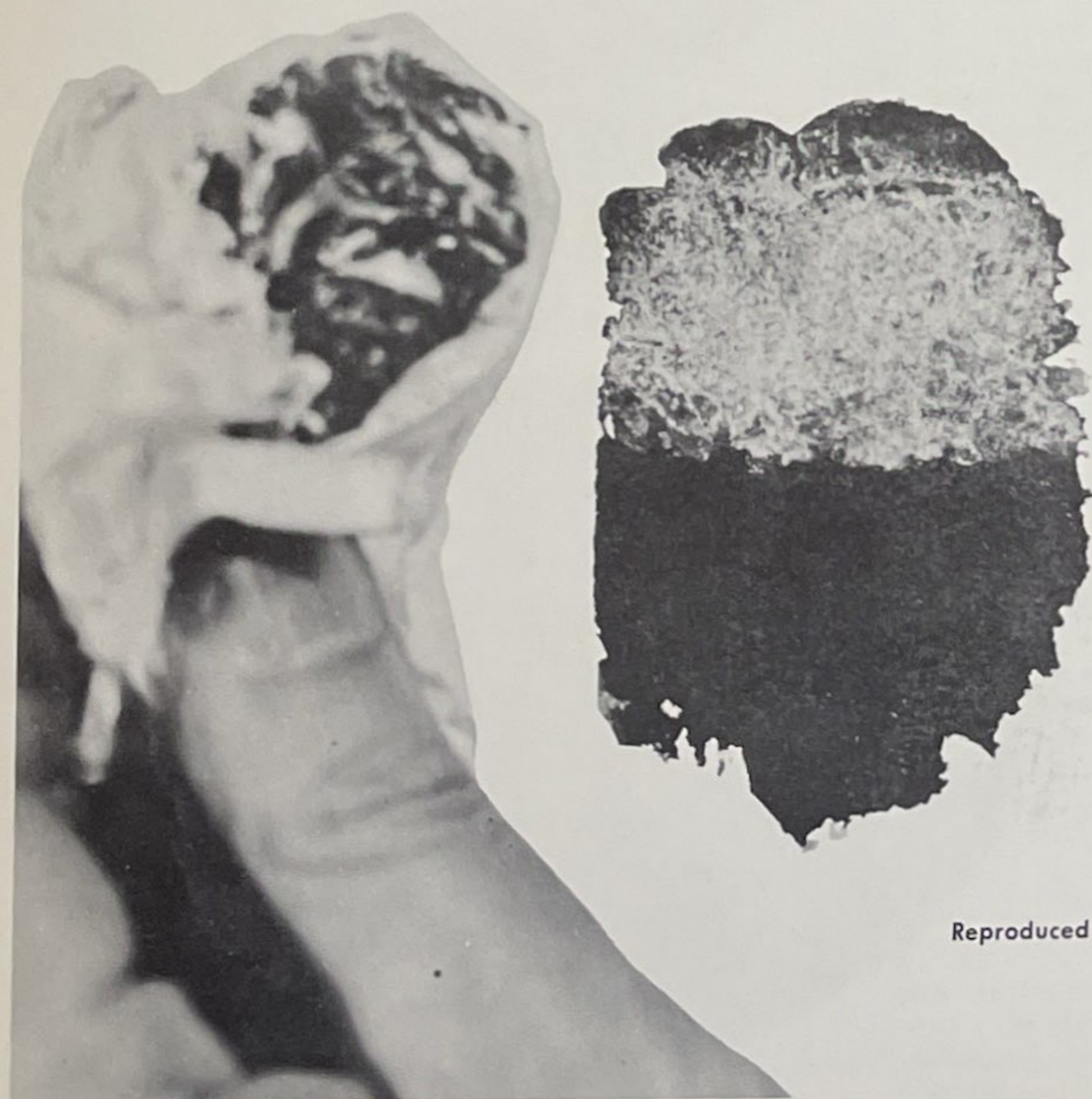
Make leaves like these by first drawing the lines with a candle or a white oil crayon. Then, with a brush well laden with pigment, quickly paint over the entire leaf.
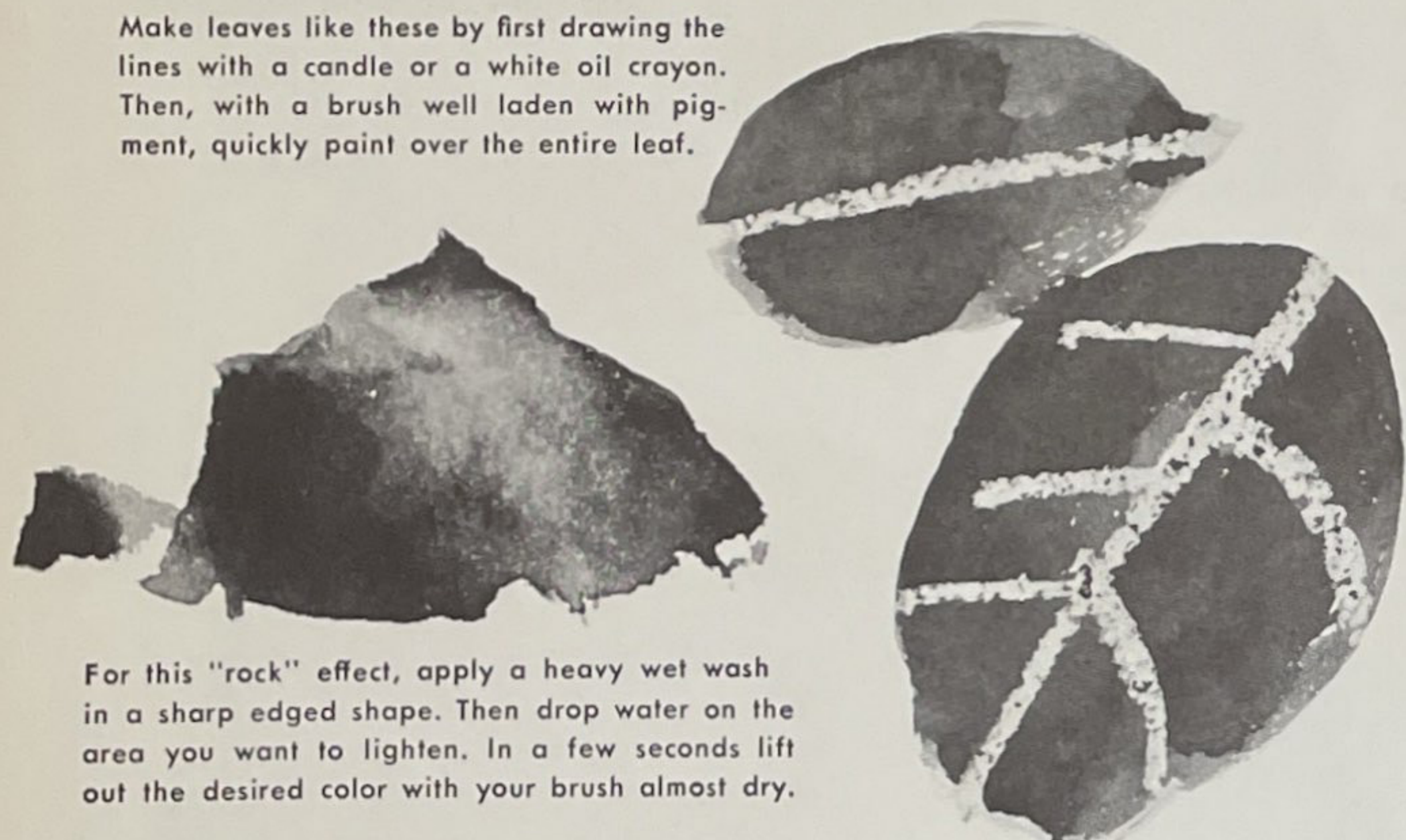
For this "rock" effect, apply a heavy wet wash in a sharp edged shape. Then drop water on the area you want to lighten. In a few seconds lift out the desired color with your brush almost dry.

This effect results from doing exactly as with the area at the top of the page—one more step is added: dip a small brush in water and, while the area is still moist, drop water on the spots that you want lightened. Then use the point of the same brush and blot or pick out the color from the spots.

To get two tones with one stroke, use a large sable brush and fill it with a light tone mix, then fill the point with a dark tone. Lean the brush at the proper angle and make a straight, even stroke.
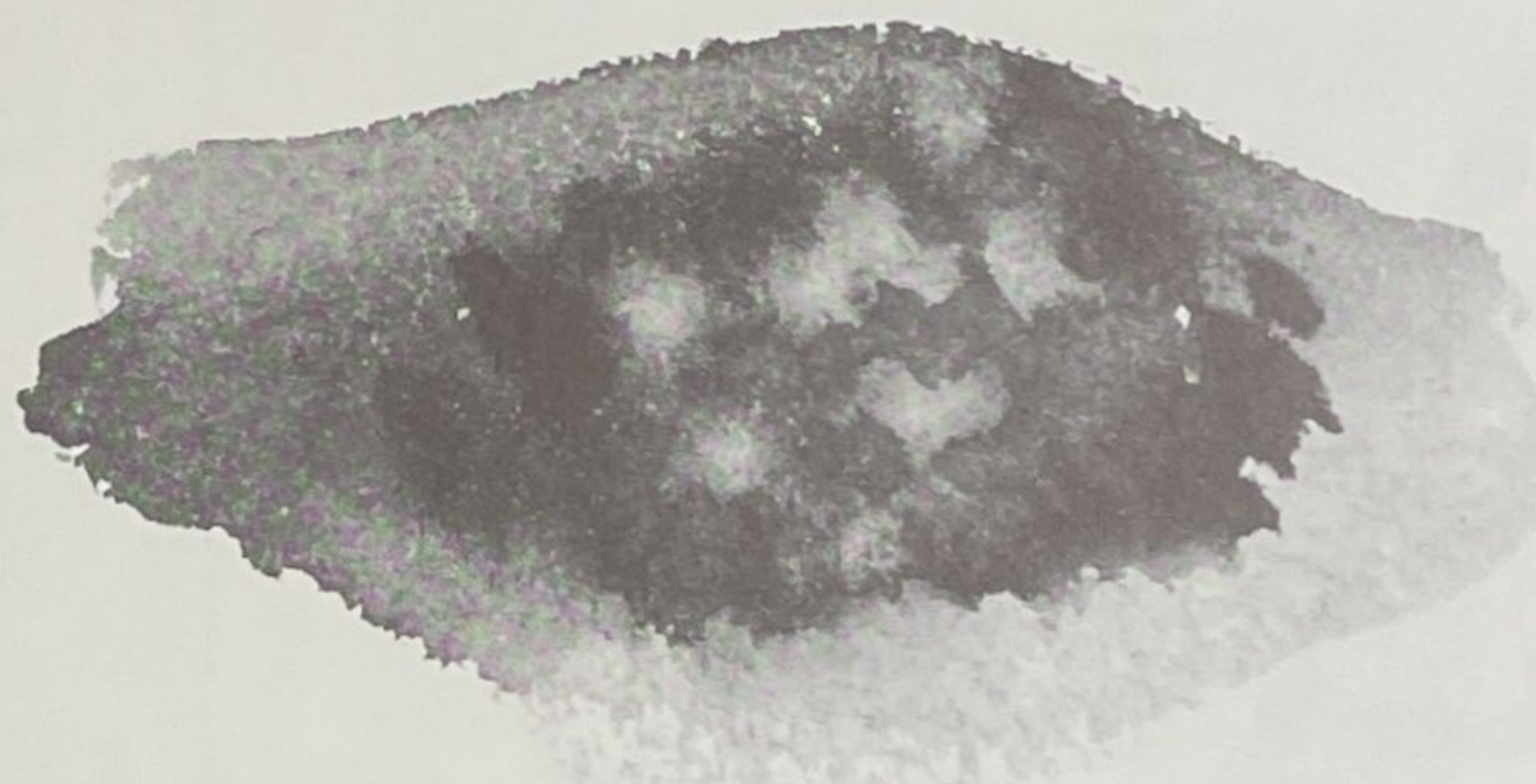
Reproduced actual size

This useful trick is done by blotting or stamping out the wet pigment with paper tissue as shown.

Before an area dries, you can make light lines through it by scratching out the pigment with the butt end of your brush.

How to paint form into dark areas

You will find it most useful to learn how to start with a simple, large dark area and paint form into it while it is still wet. With this technique you can correct areas that don't look right to you at first or you can employ it intentionally at the start to get ever-so-pleasing final effects.

Using a tree trunk for demonstration purposes, we show you on this page just how — step by step — this technique is successfully applied. Remember — you must always work on a wet or quite moist painting surface.

1 First, apply a dark wash quickly over the entire tree trunk area.

2 Second, drop clear water on the simple, broad areas you want to lighten. Soak out most of the water and pigment with the brush almost dry so no rings or water marks remain.

3 With a small brush fairly dry, put small dark lines into the light areas made in the second step. This gives texture to the bark of the tree.

4 Last, let the tree trunk completely dry, then touch it up here and there with details and strong accents.
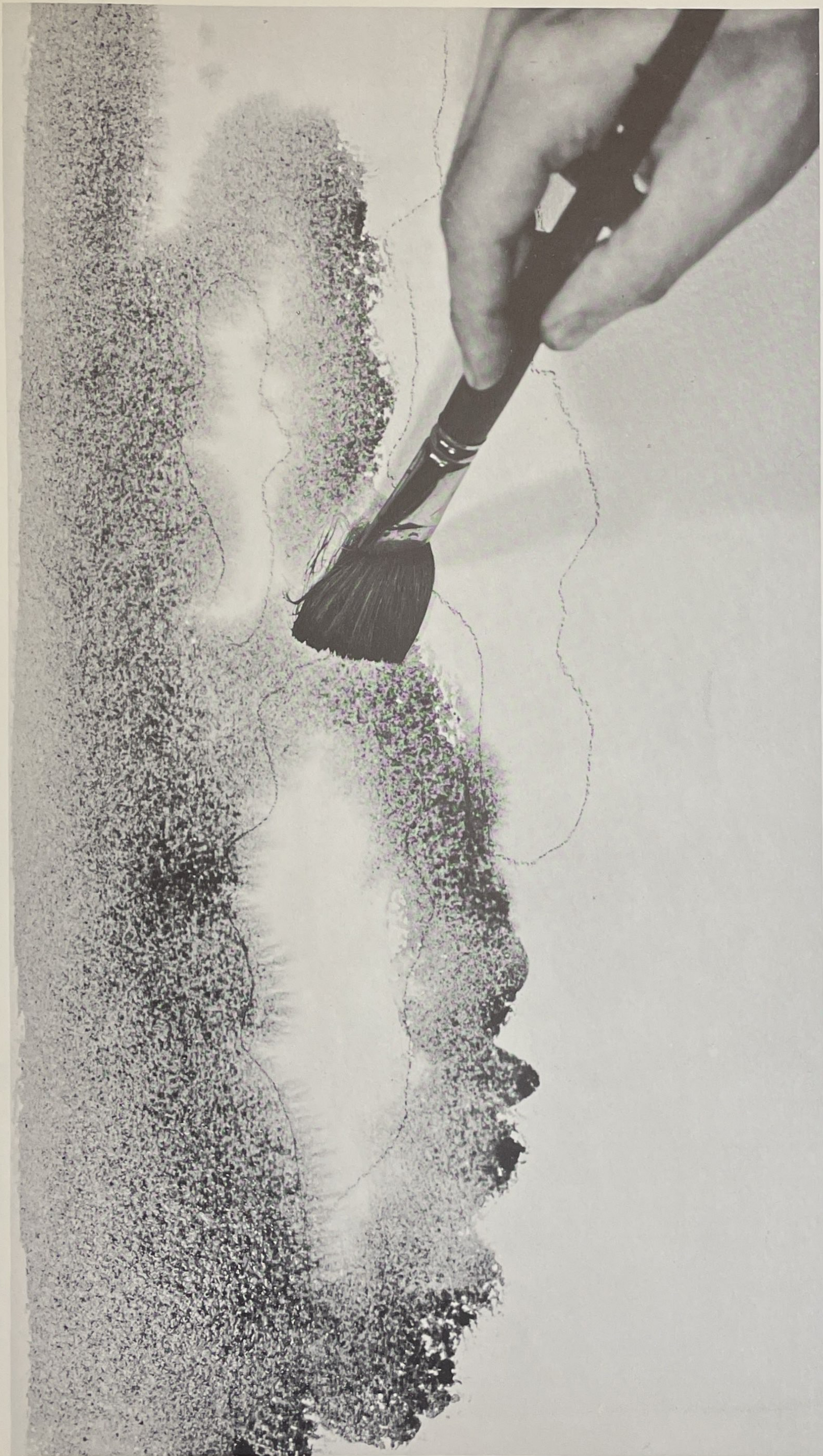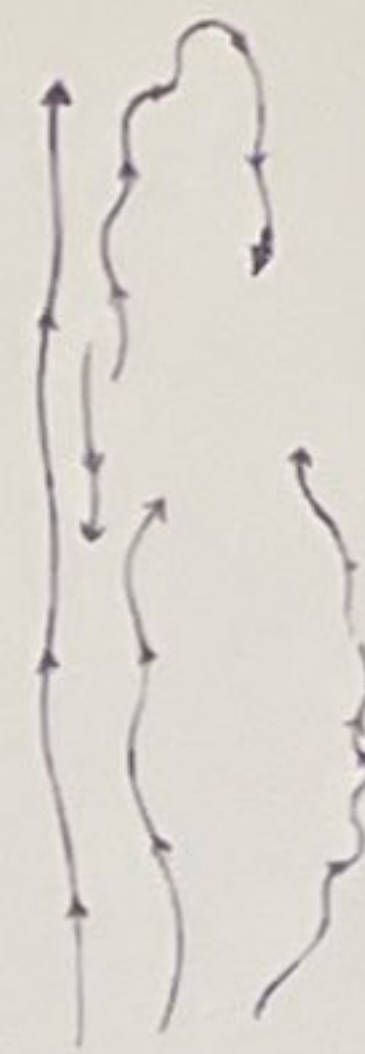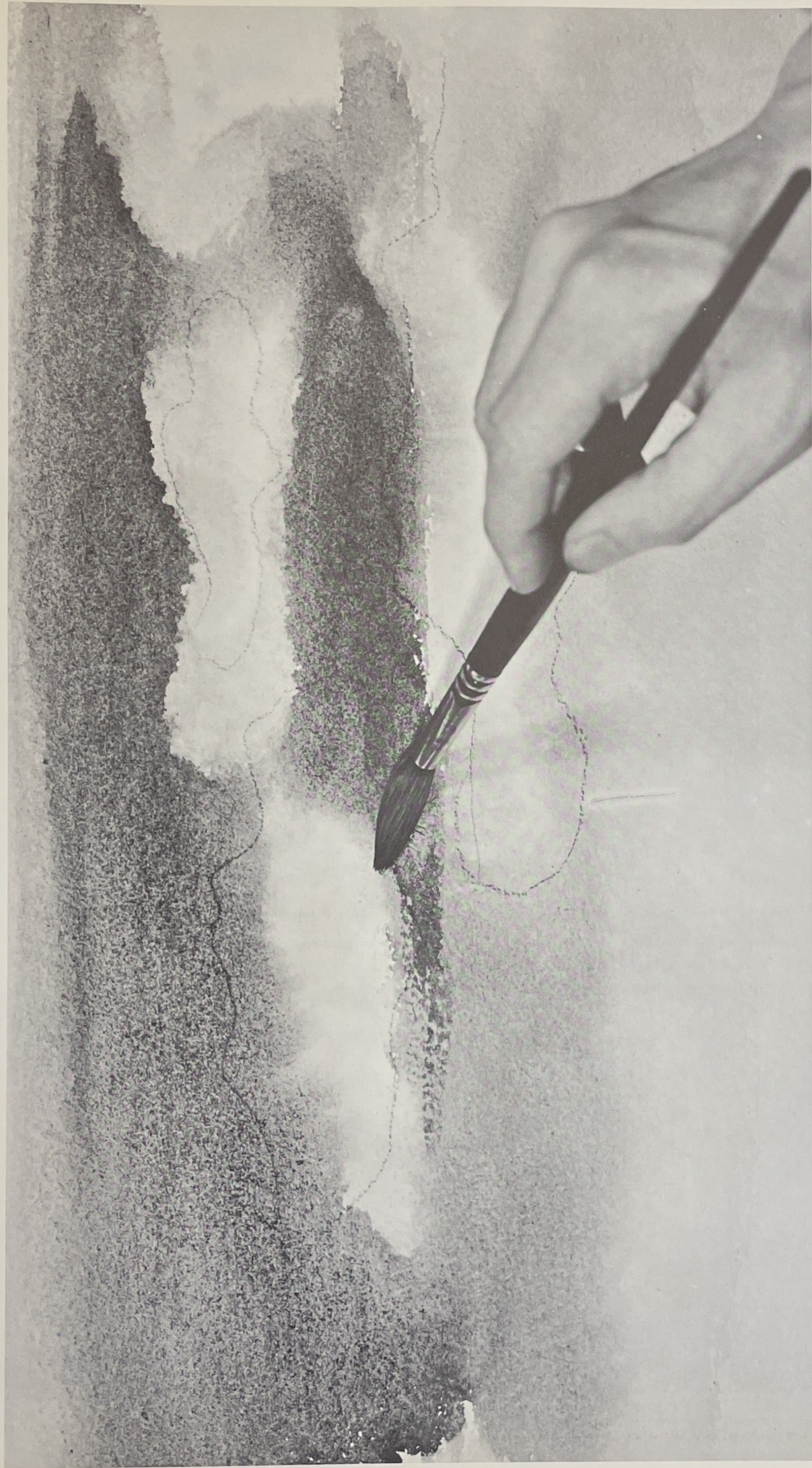
Reproduced actual size

Painting a large area

1 When painting a large area, such as the sky, you will have better control of the brush, work more quickly, and have more freedom for your hand and arm if you paint standing up. To do this best, mount the paper on your drawing board and tilt it up at the back, so that the water will work downward. Look at the diagram sketch beneath the large illustration on page 17.

Before starting to paint the above sky, first encircle several cloud shapes with a pencil. Then, with a large brush, wet the paper evenly all over with free swinging strokes. Next, mix an ample amount of blue on your palette and apply it quickly around the pencil lines, using stroke directions as indicated by the arrows in the diagram sketch at the right.

Now, fill a medium-size flat brush with a slightly lighter blue and paint it toward the bottom of the picture, lightening the color gradually as you do so. If the wash tends to run too much, place the drawing board flat or tilt it the other way. Thumb tacks are used to hold the heavy paper in place. Masking tape is good too, and keeps your edges sharp and straight.

One layer over another

2 The above illustration shows the way to complete the painting started on the opposite page. In order to make the sky look real, you must paint another layer of darker blue over certain areas of the first—which by now has settled but is not dry. This time use a large round brush and be sure to add the same amount of water to the darker paint as you used for the first layer. Otherwise, the two layers will not dry together, thus creating water marks or rings. There is nothing wrong with creating rings or marks intentionally to get certain pleasing passages and effects. But in large areas like the above, where a certain over-all feeling of smoothness is desired, water marks or rings would seem out of place. If you should find, after this stage of the painting has dried, that the areas are not dark enough, wet the entire painting, as you were instructed to do on the opposite page—and do the dark areas over in a darker value.
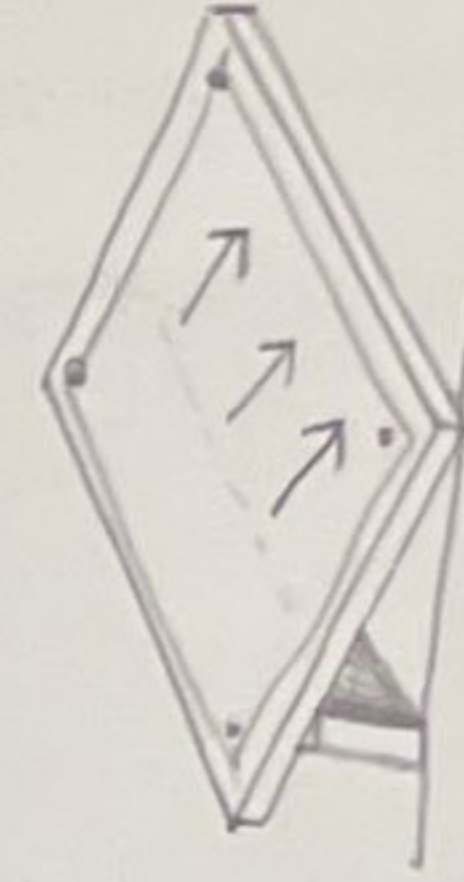
Painting three moods of the sky

1 To get this effect of rain falling from dark stormy clouds, first make quick, wet horizontal strokes of light gray across the lower half, then at once paint the top half with wet dark pigment, and let the two blend. When still wet, brush down some of the upper dark into the light, as shown. Finish by lifting out some of the dark with a clean brush.

2 To get the great variety of colors and values found in a brilliant sunset, one brings into play many of the brush, pigment and water manipulations described heretofore. This study, in the main, is wet-on-wet — lots of water and varying values of color all flowing together. For interesting spots, lift out color here and there, with a clean dry brush.

3 These fleecy white clouds, found in the sky on a peaceful summer afternoon, can be painted in the same identical way as demonstrated on page 16 and 17. (That is, outline cloud areas with pencil, wet entire area, then paint around clouds and let the dark color bleed into cloud edges.) The soft edges thus made give the clouds substance and form.

Painting water – in three steps
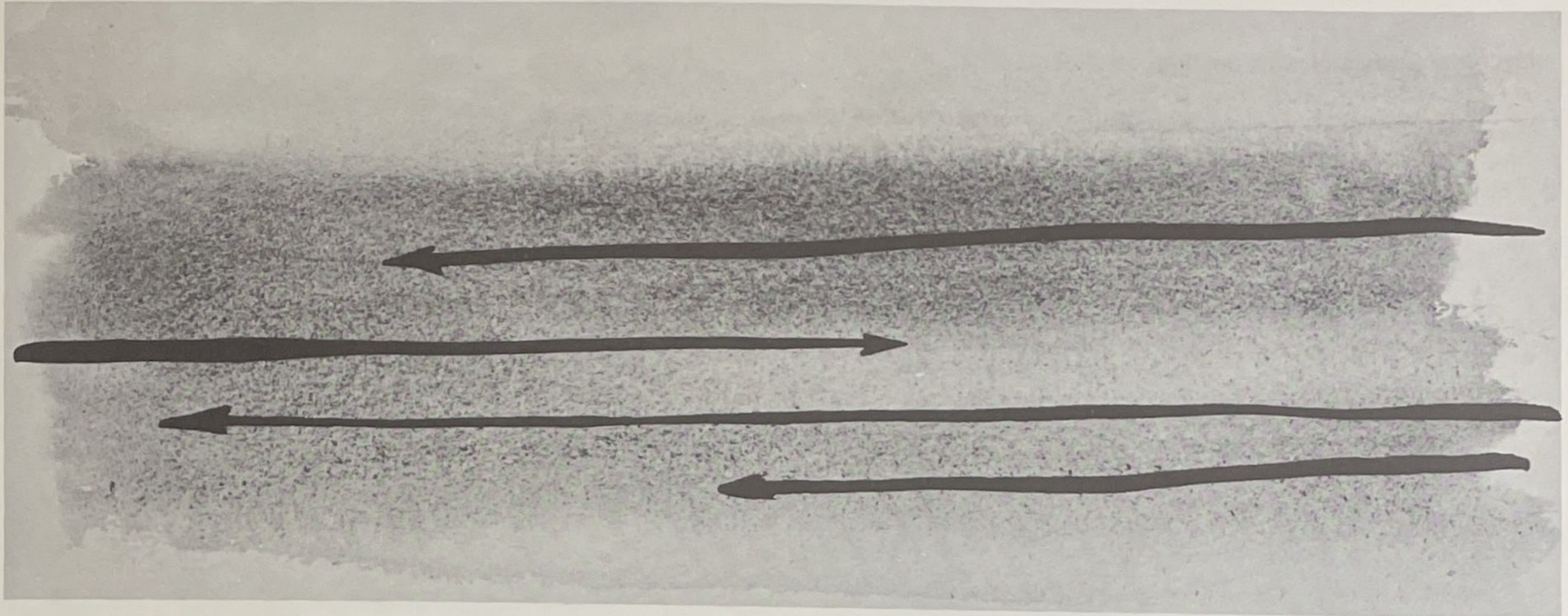
1 To paint water in more or less repose, first thoroughly wet the paper with a large brush, then apply wet color with long horizontal strokes, back and forth across the area. This will make it look calm and untroubled.

2 Next, add dark color here and there for shadows of waves and for depth in the picture. Let this settle and then take out color with a clean, dry brush to make some sharp, narrow, light tones over the waves. Do this with a smaller round brush.

3 While all this is drying, and with the same brush as in Step #2, work in some dark, dry brush strokes to complete the effect of water. Make these thinner and closer together as they go away into the distance. This will give the seascape a feeling of depth and perspective. Since we are painting a calm sea, all strokes should be kept fairly horizontal.

Effects with the oriental water color brush

Many oriental peoples use a small round brush with a very sharp point both to make the characters of their languages and for painting. This brush has a straight, cylindrical handle, without taper, as shown above. Such a brush is a desirable adjunct to the complete water color kit. When used in the typical oriental fashion — held perpendicularly — one can secure many crisp detail effects that add great interest to the picture. Some of these strokes are demonstrated in groups and combinations below. Similar effects can be made with regular, pointed brushes.

Texture strokes — may be cobblestones.

More texture strokes.

This could be stumps in silhouette.

Short growing twigs with most of the leaves blown off.

Reproduced actual size

Pine trees.

Texture for leaves.

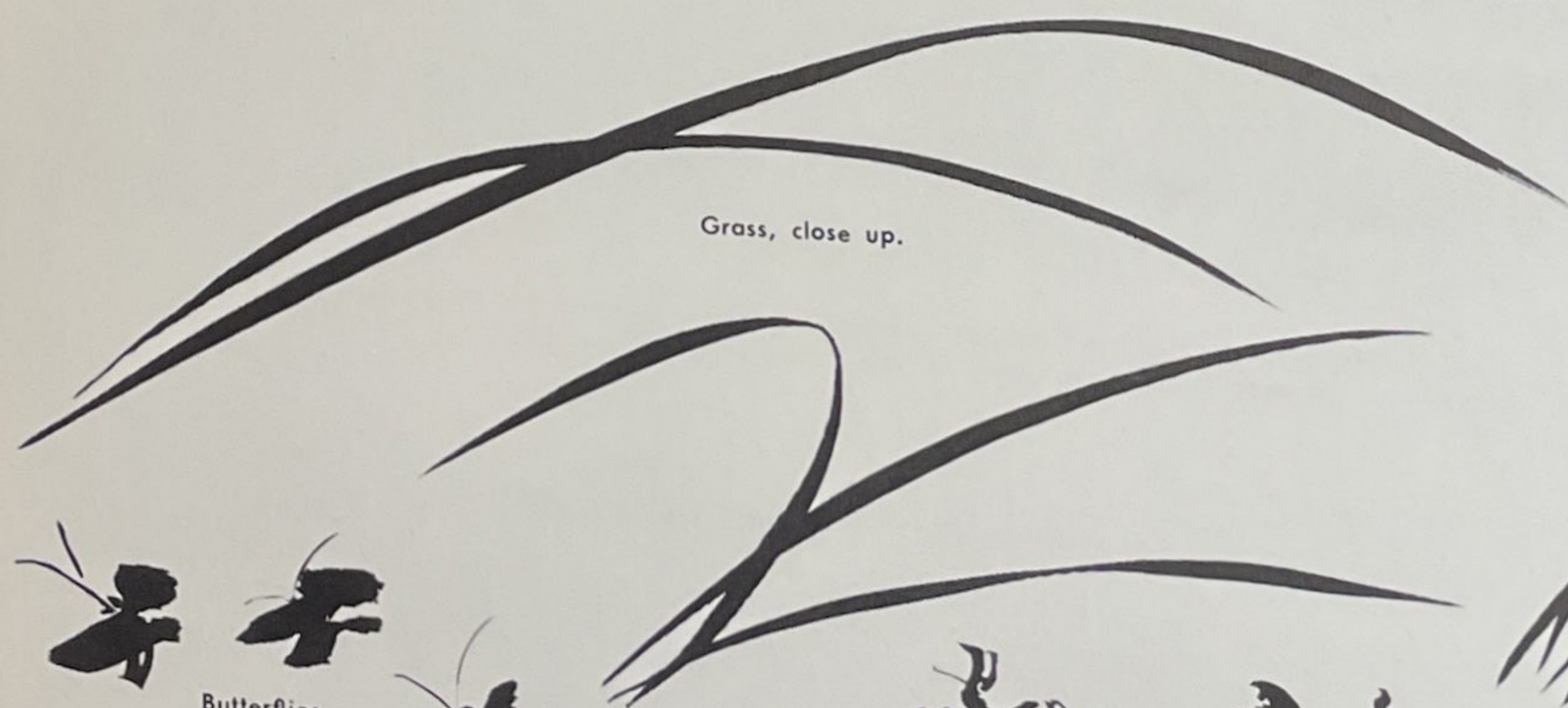Reeds in the wind.

Sumac leaf fronds.

Bamboo leaves.

Pine leaf detail.
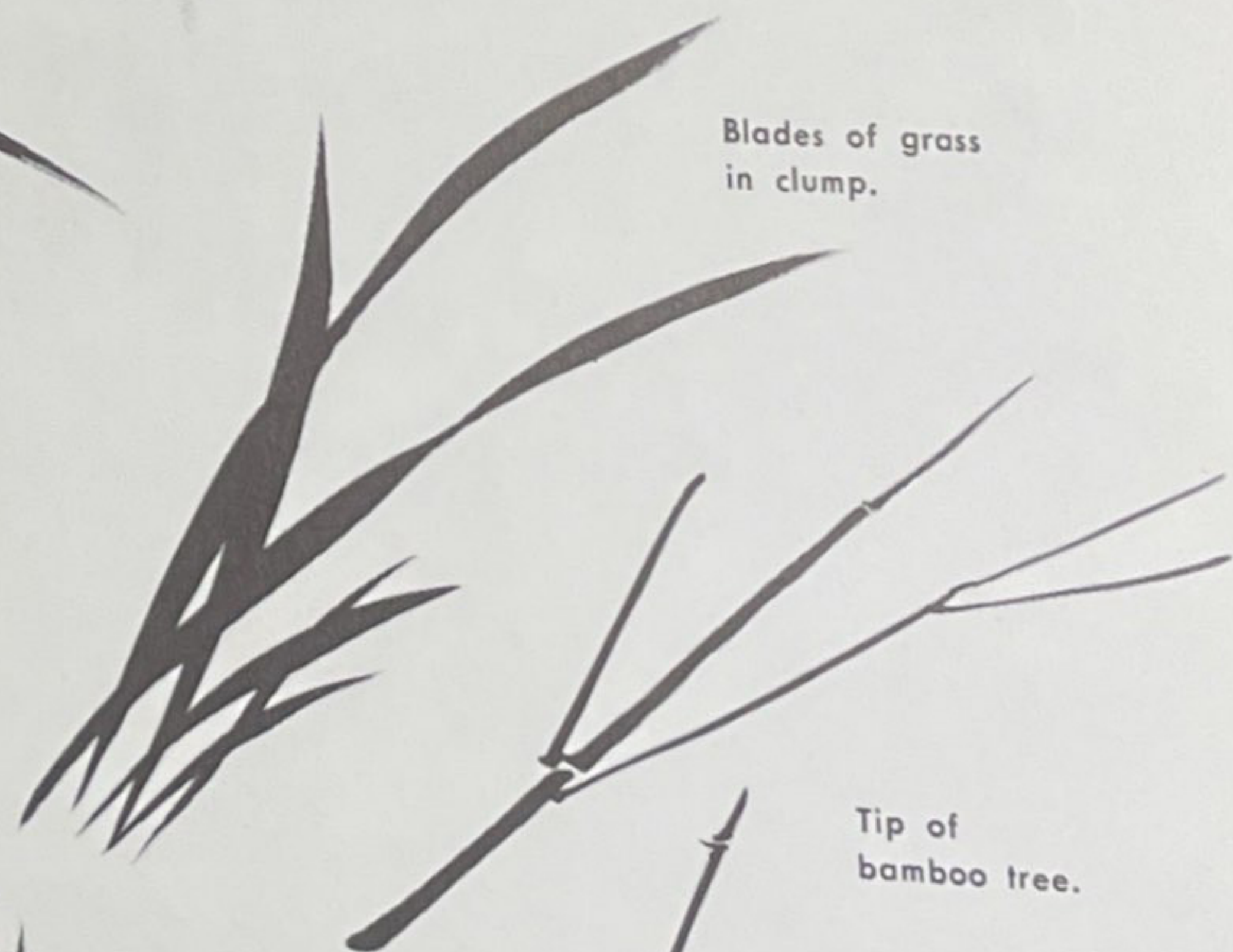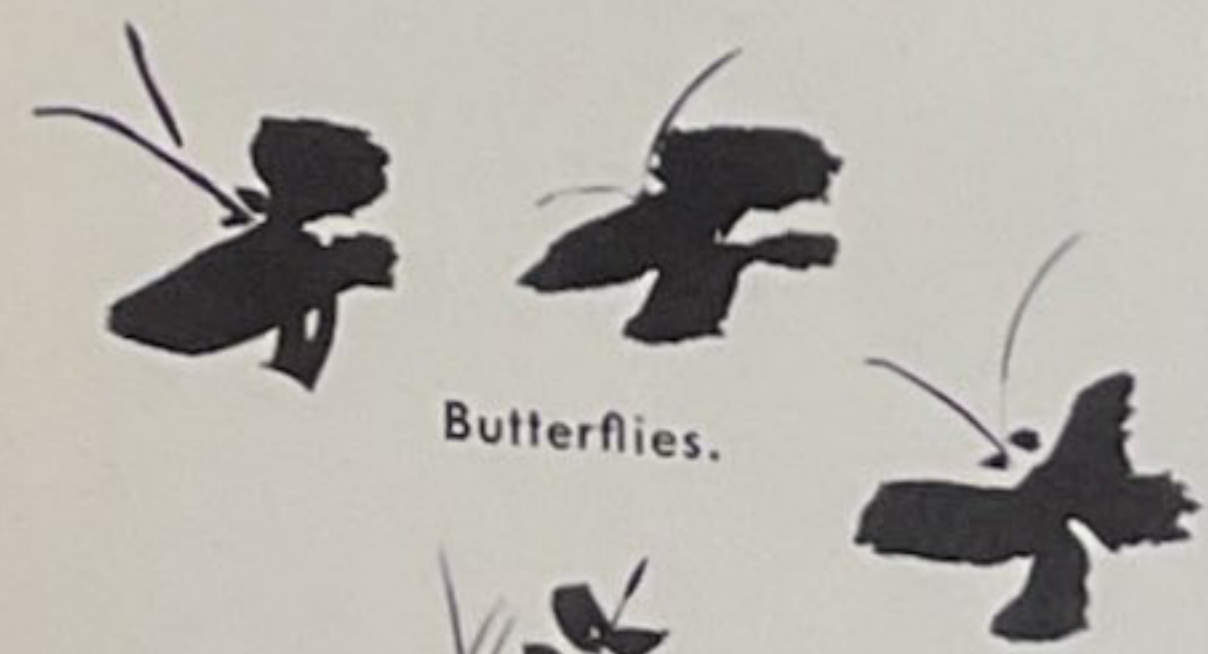
Evergreens in snow.
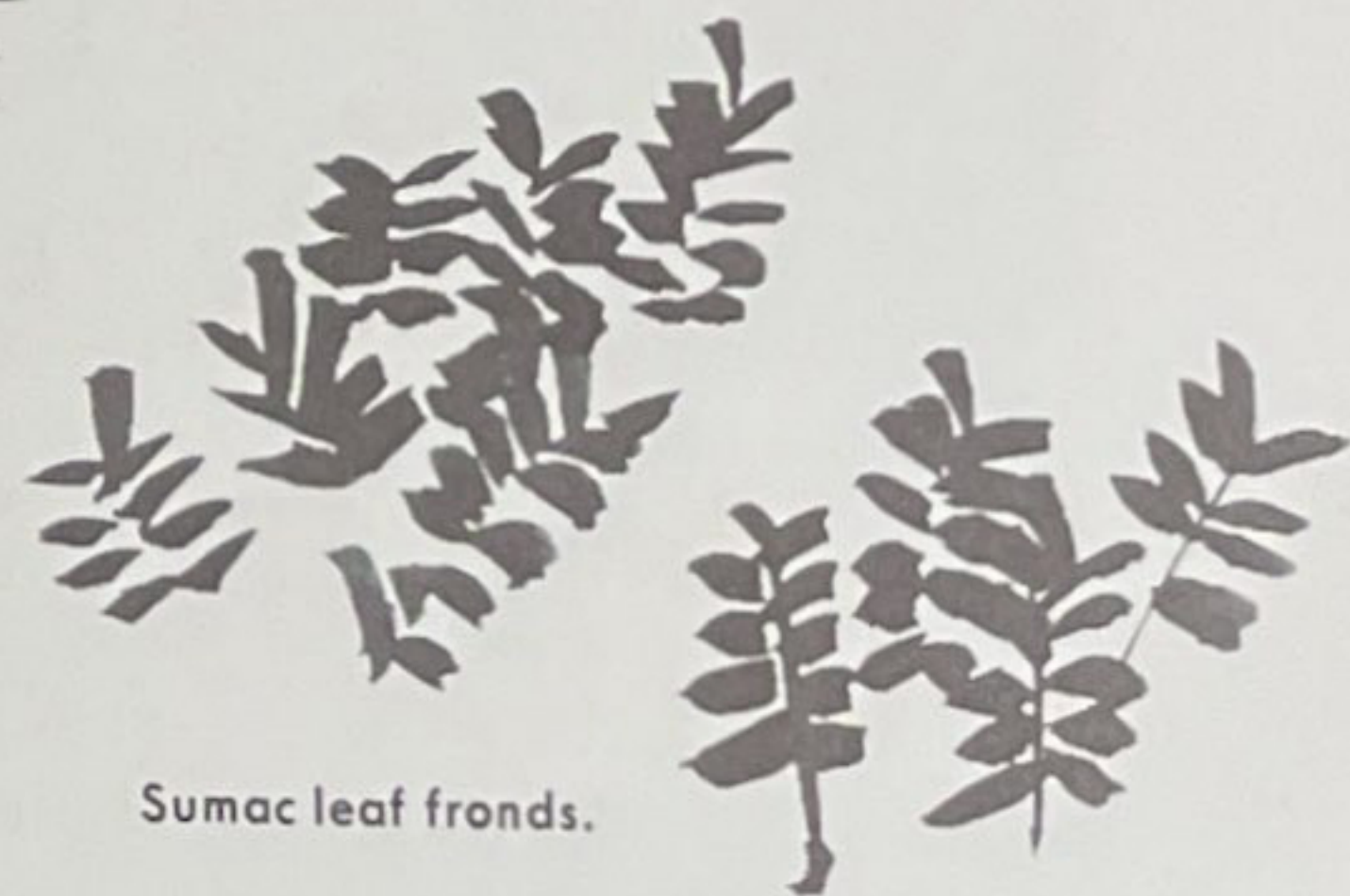
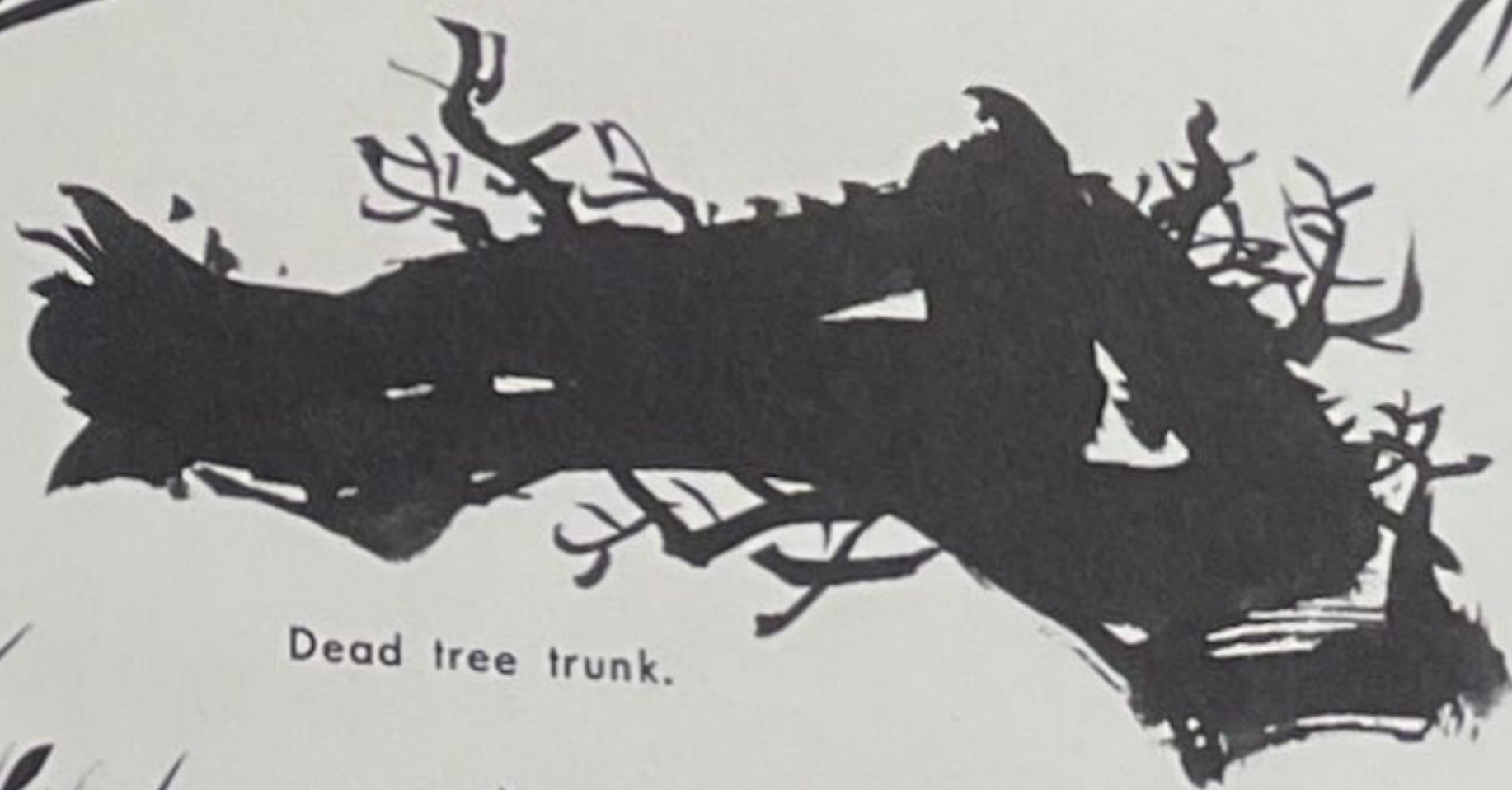Waves in lake or ocean.

Grass, close up.

Blades of grass in clump.

Butterflies.

Tip of bamboo tree.

Dead tree trunk.

Bamboo twigs and shoots.

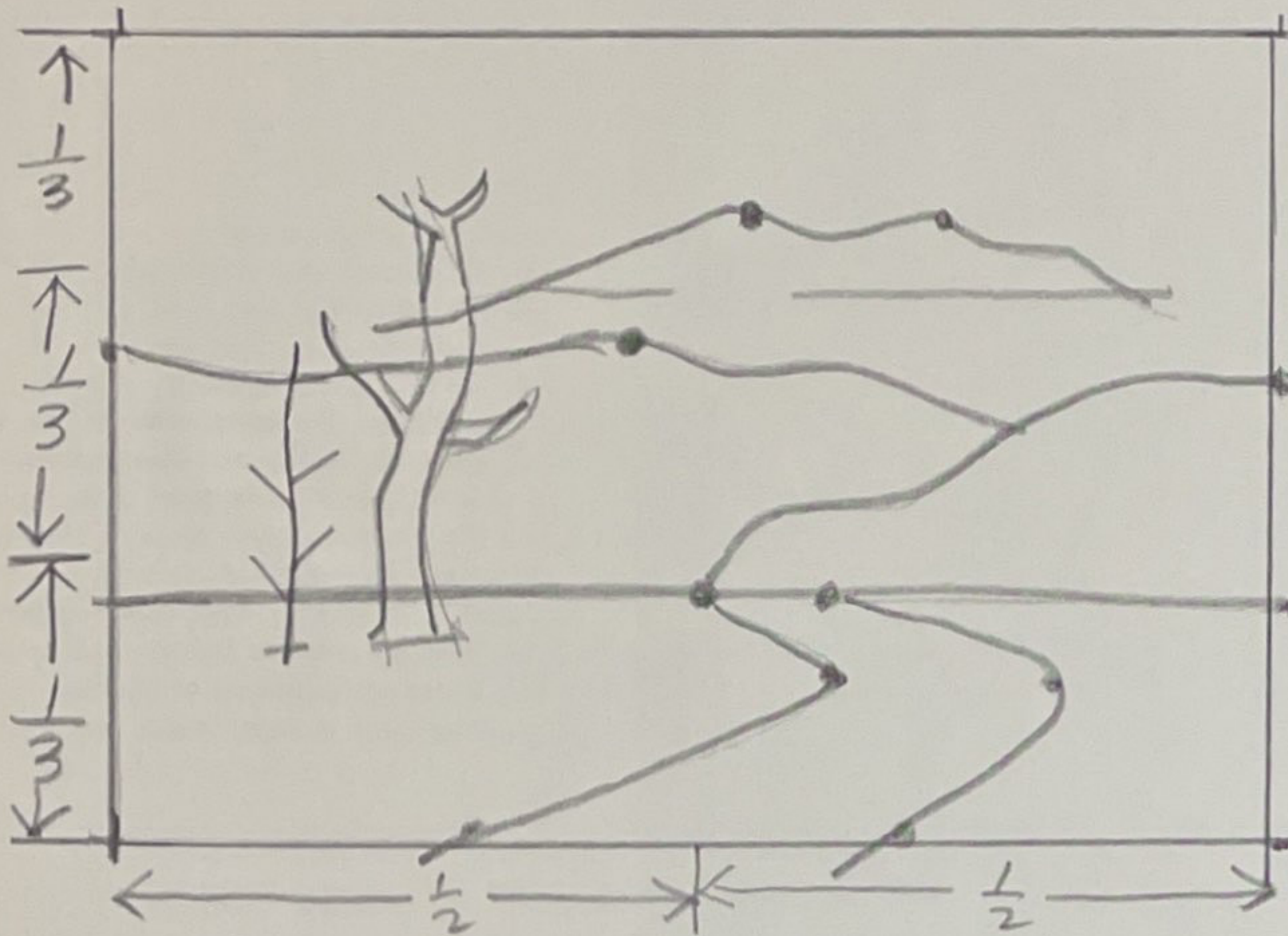Twig forms with leaves.

Grass spikes.

Willow twigs and leaves.

Rock forms in light and shadow.

Beginning a water color

By now you perhaps want to paint a water color yourself. We suggest that you start with a simple scene like the landscape on this page. You may have a view somewhat like this near where you live — not exactly like this of course, but something pleasant and simple in composition that you have often wanted to record in paint.

Step one is to make a plan on the order of that which you see adjacent. In doing this you first draw a straight line, freehand, across this area. This will represent the horizon, up about a third from the bottom. Next draw the line representing the base of the upper hill. This should be placed about a third down from the top, which leaves approximately a third of the picture space for the middle-ground. Dots may be placed at various points to establish locations and to mark special spots of interest in the picture. Now draw in the connecting lines, as shown. This helps you give the sketch plan good composition and proportion.

With this diagram completed you are ready to work on the picture. We suggest that you use heavy paper, cut to measure eleven by fifteen inches; this is just a quarter of the area of a "full-size" sheet. Begin by mounting this paper down on the board with masking tape, as shown in the large illustration below. Then, following your sketch plan, draw in corresponding lines with a pencil, to guide you in your painting. A carefully worked out plan of this kind, made in advance, will keep you from making mistakes which may result in rough erasures on your paper; areas, thus lacerated, will make the paper "take" the wash unevenly.

In the demonstration that follows, we will be talking about light and dark tones only, since no color is shown. You must use your imagination and good taste in selecting the color scheme for *your* picture.

1 This kind of a diagram or plan sketch should be made before painting any water color. You will not paint over it when finished, but simply follow it when you sketch in your final painting with light pencil lines. A word of advice here: if you want to erase these sketch lines when you have finished your work, be sure to use art gum or some other soft eraser, after the painting is *absolutely dry.*

2 Select a large flat brush and wet the top or sky part of the picture. Now thoroughly mix a lot of the sky color you want and quickly test it out on a piece of white paper, which you will have there beside you for that purpose. If the color seems right to you, start stroking it across and gradually down the area with your large brush filled with color. We suggest that you stand up to paint this area so that you may have complete freedom of movement. The next steps are on the following page.
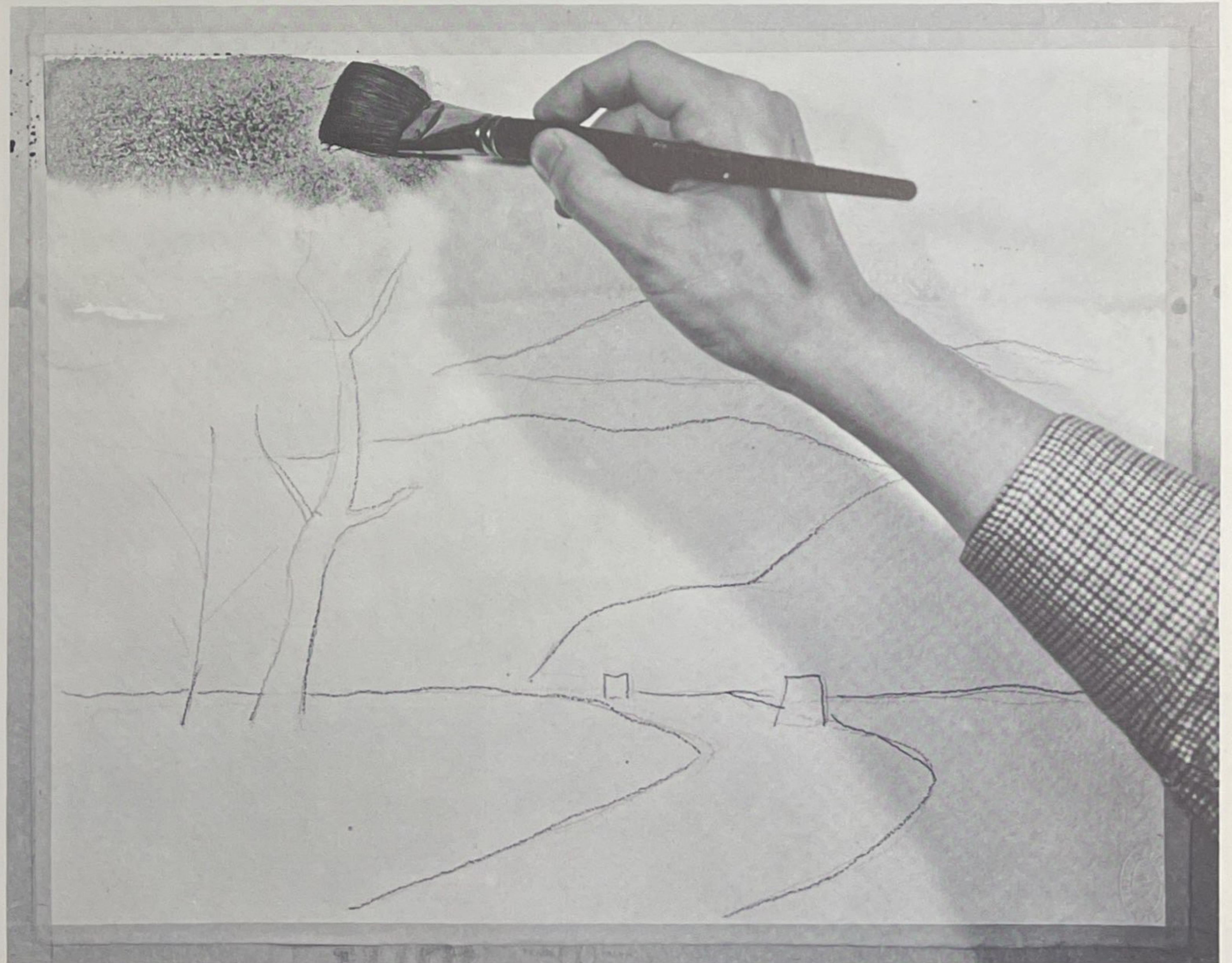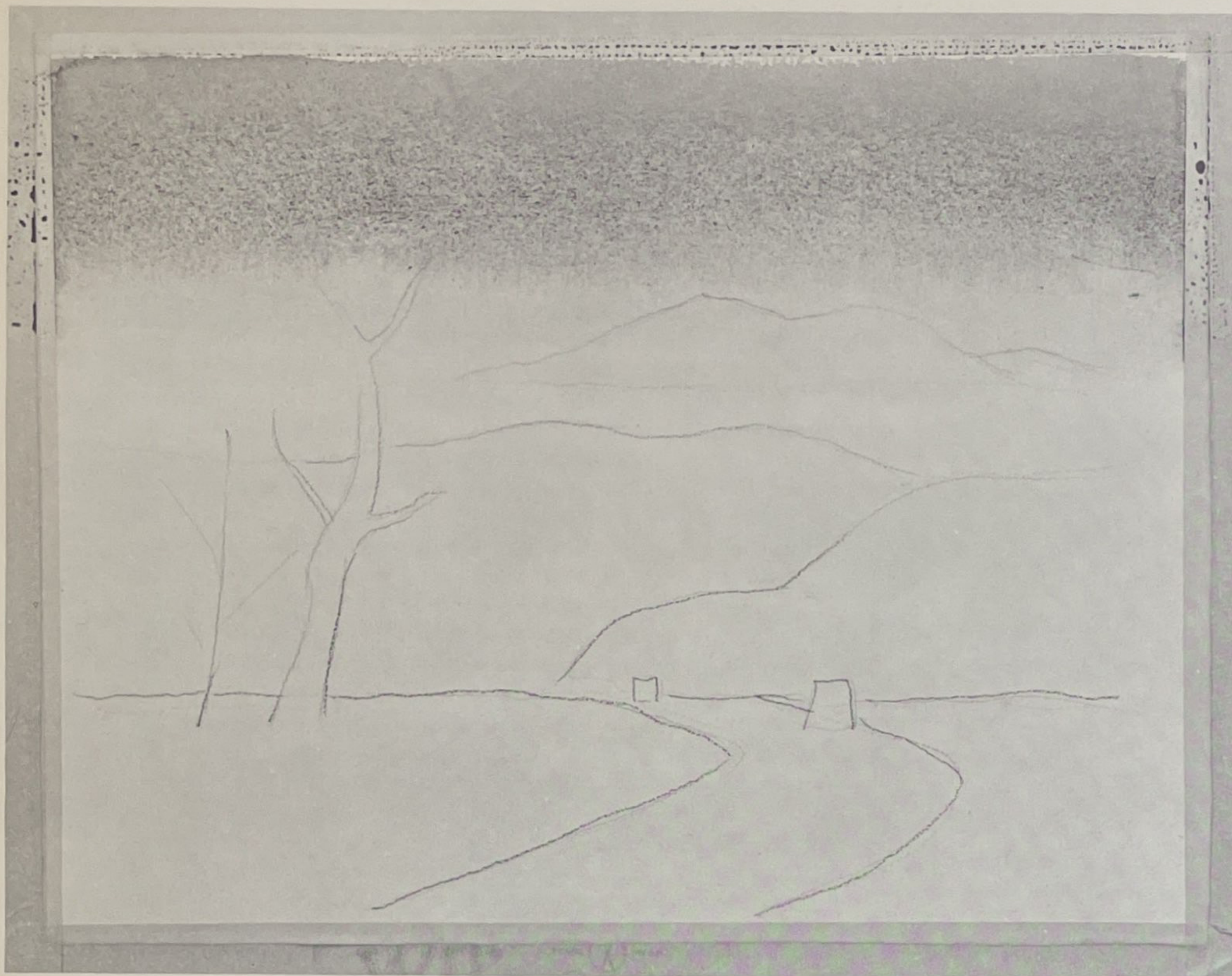
3 Complete the upper part of the sky right across the picture and blend it down—by adding more water—into the unpainted wet area, so that you grade it from darker at the top to very light behind the hills. If excess water from the wash of lighter tone accumulates at the bottom of the area, take it out with a clean, moist brush.
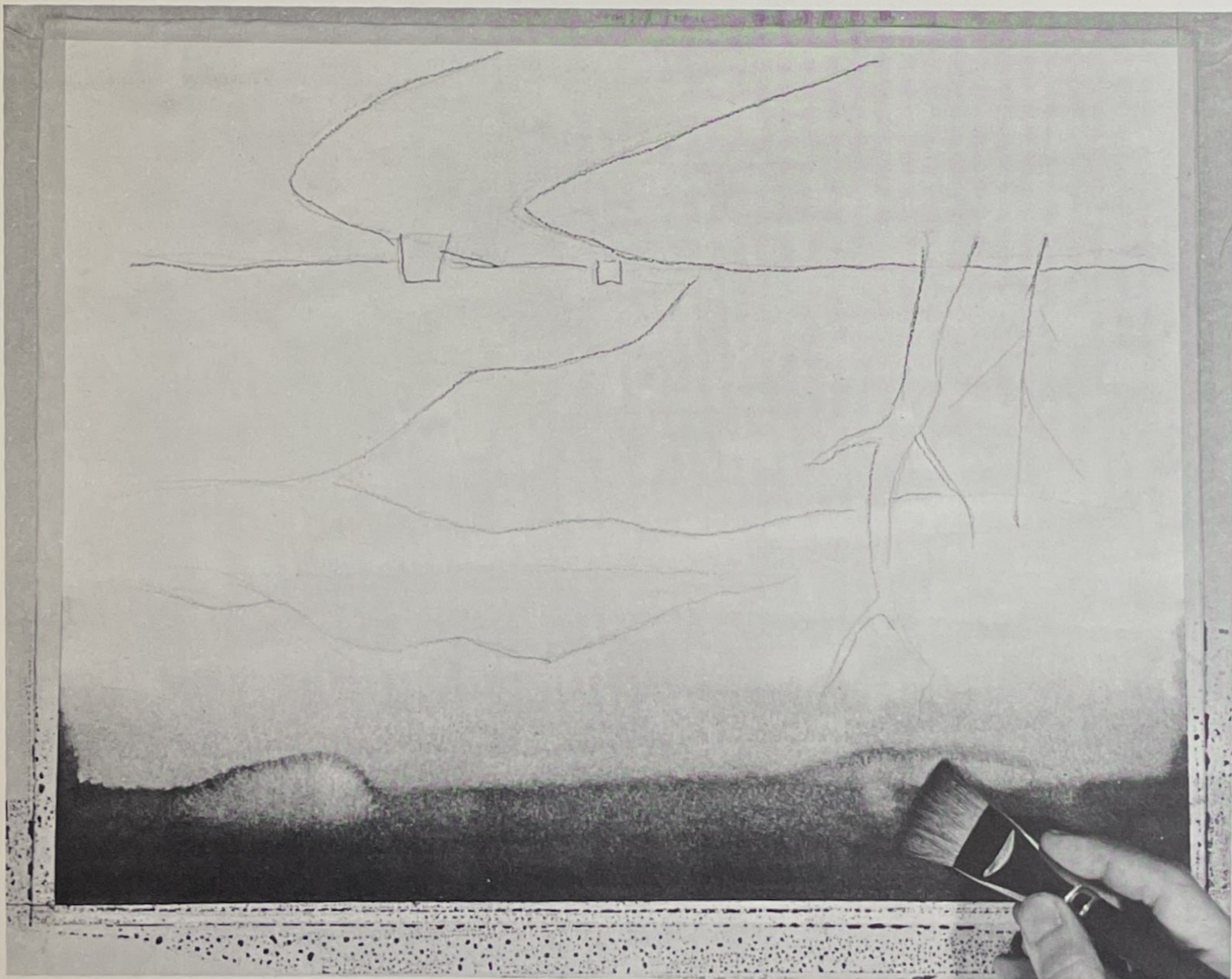
4 When the sky has settled a few seconds, turn your drawing board upside down and, using a large brush, work much darker tones into the upper part of the sky, as shown. This is to make the sky look interesting and moody. It also gives it perspective. Drop on a little water here and there after the dark area has settled, and let this dry into rings or marks. This makes for more character than if it were smooth and plain.

5 After the sky is completely dry, paint the upper hill in the distance. If you were to paint the hill while the sky area is still wet, some of the color would be likely to bleed into the sky and keep the hill from standing out sharp and clear against the soft background. Paint the hill freely with a medium-size round brush, using a wet mixture. The lower edge disappears in fog — thus use a dry brush technique at this point to make it fade quickly out of sight. Now clean the brush and lift out color here and there to make light areas for better form.
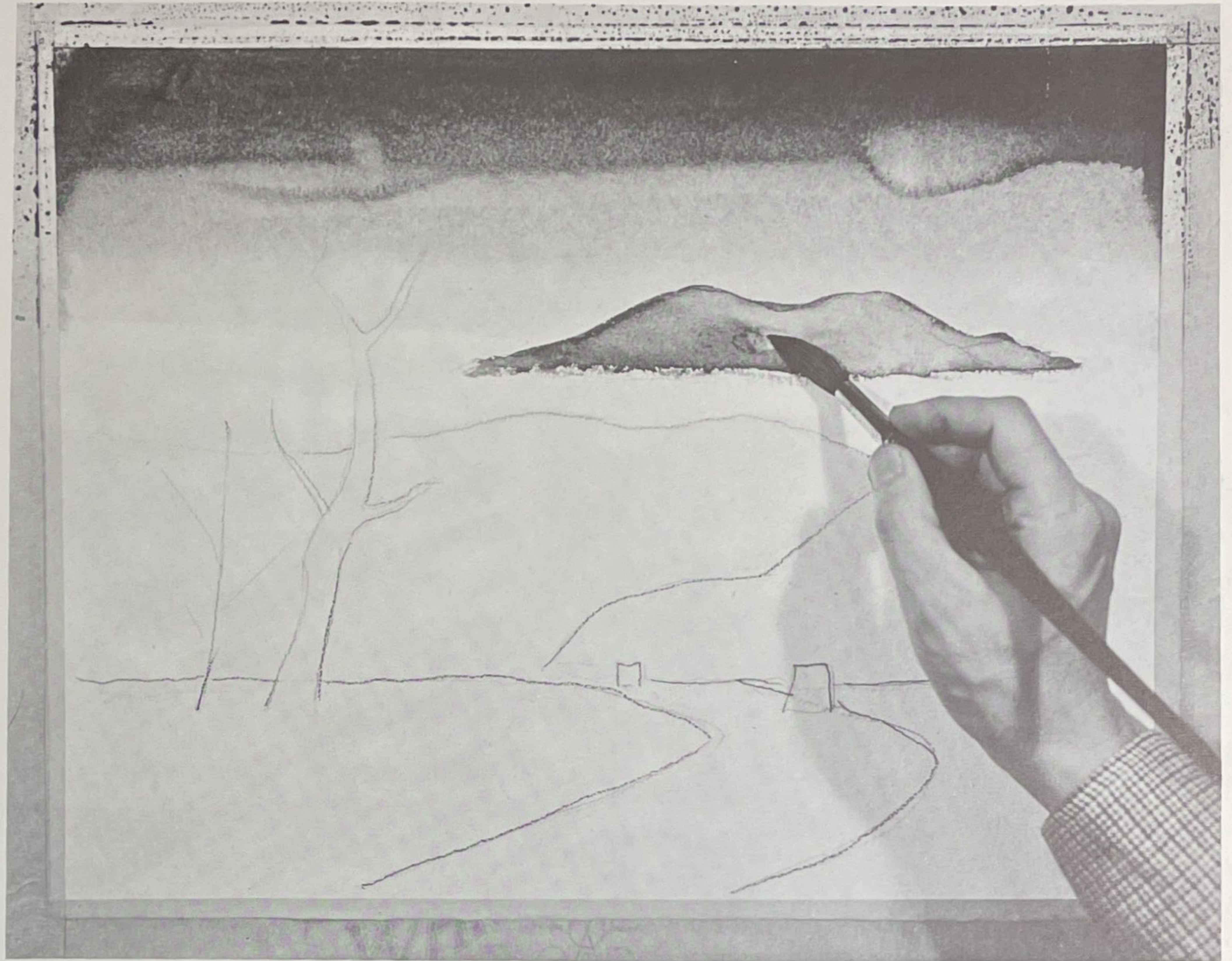

6 The left middle-ground is painted into dry paper at the top to get a sharp edge at the crest of the hill. Start at the top with a light wet wash, grade it downward and then work the darker shadows up into it, as demonstrated. Paint right over the sketch lines of the trees. These objects will later be painted darker than the hill.
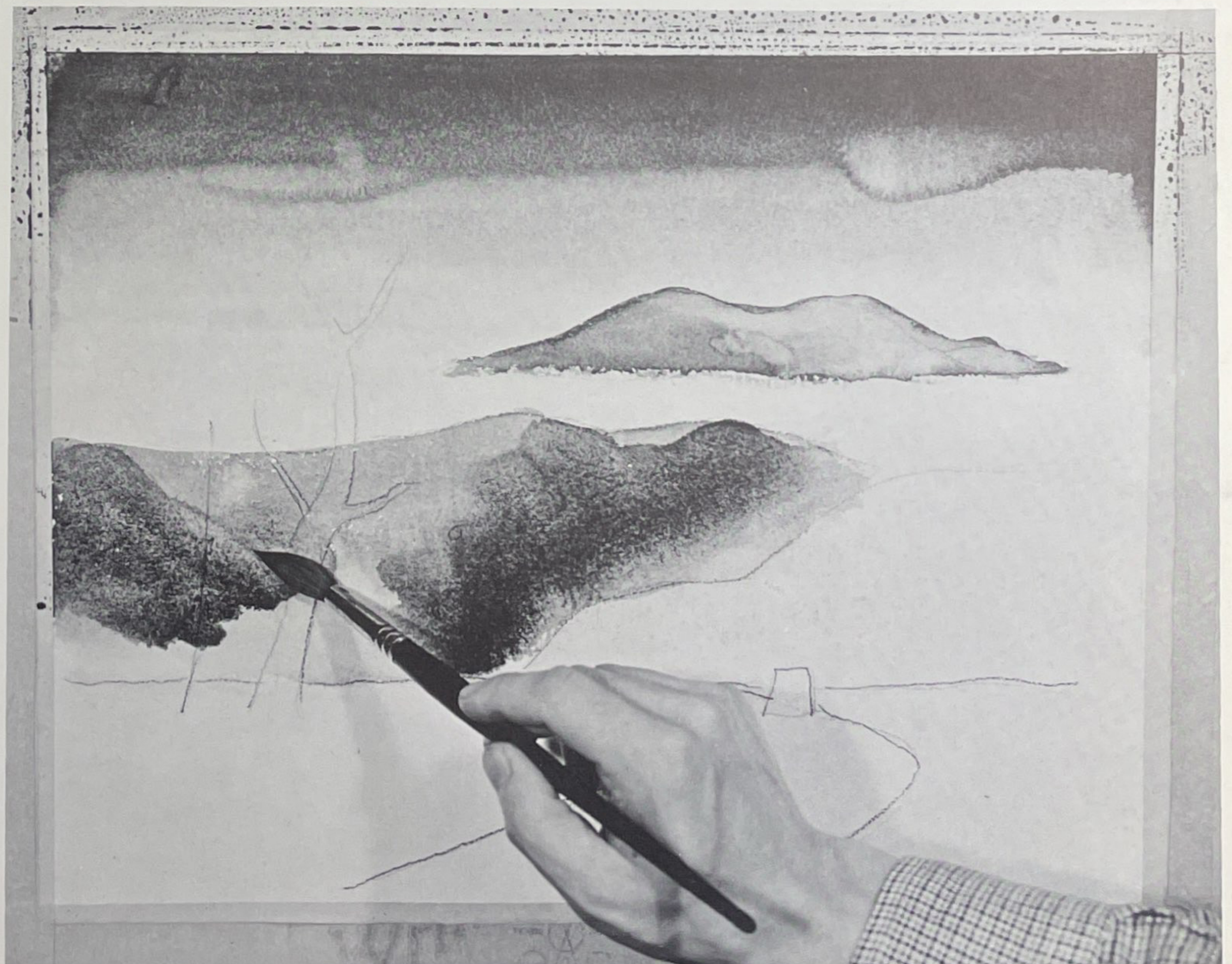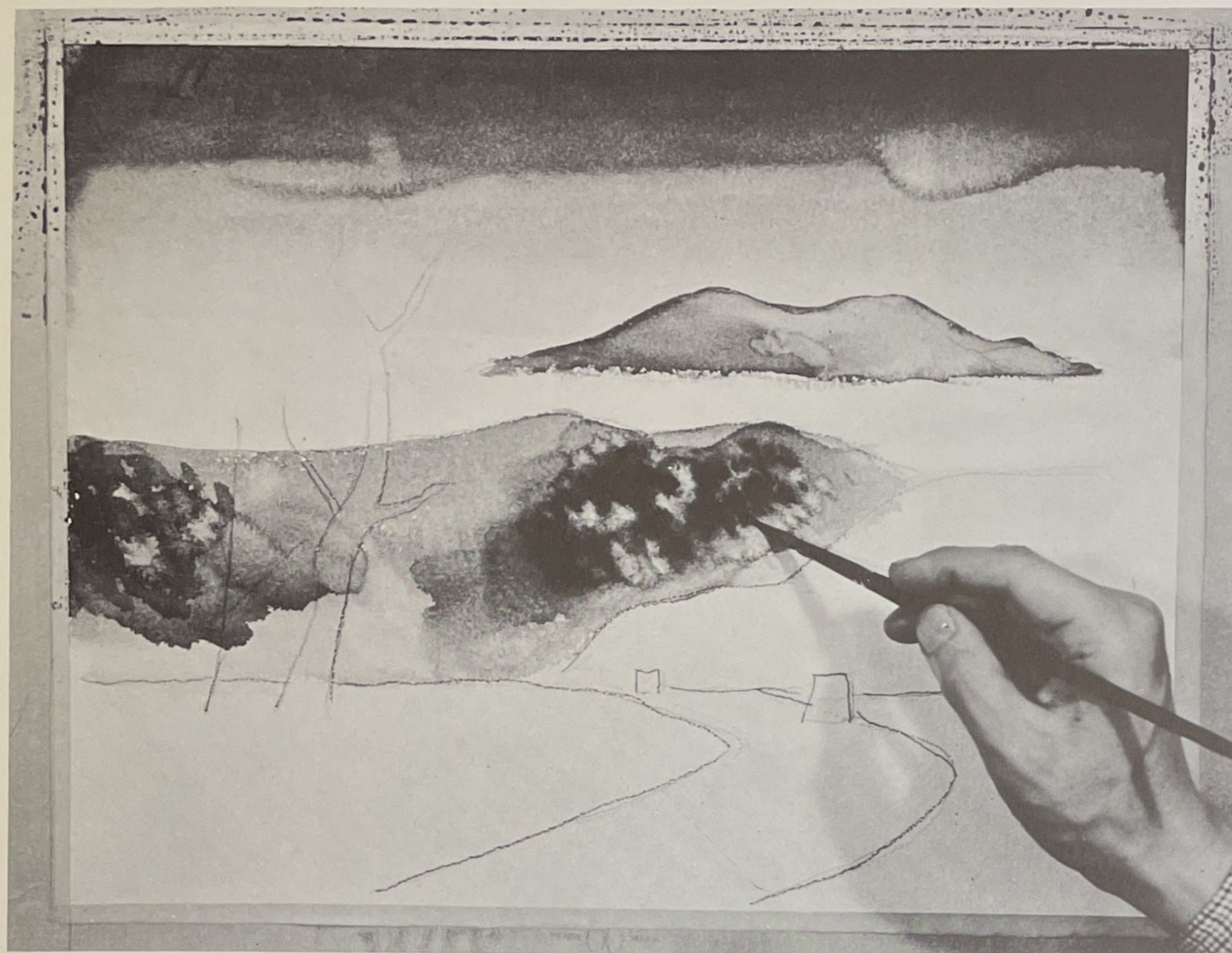
7 Let the paint on the middle-ground hill settle a few seconds, then apply drops of clear water here and there on the right slope and lower edge of the hill. Lift out the surplus water in these spots so they look like light on one side of trees. This gives them form. Do the same quickly to several places on the left hill side—and wait for the whole area to dry.
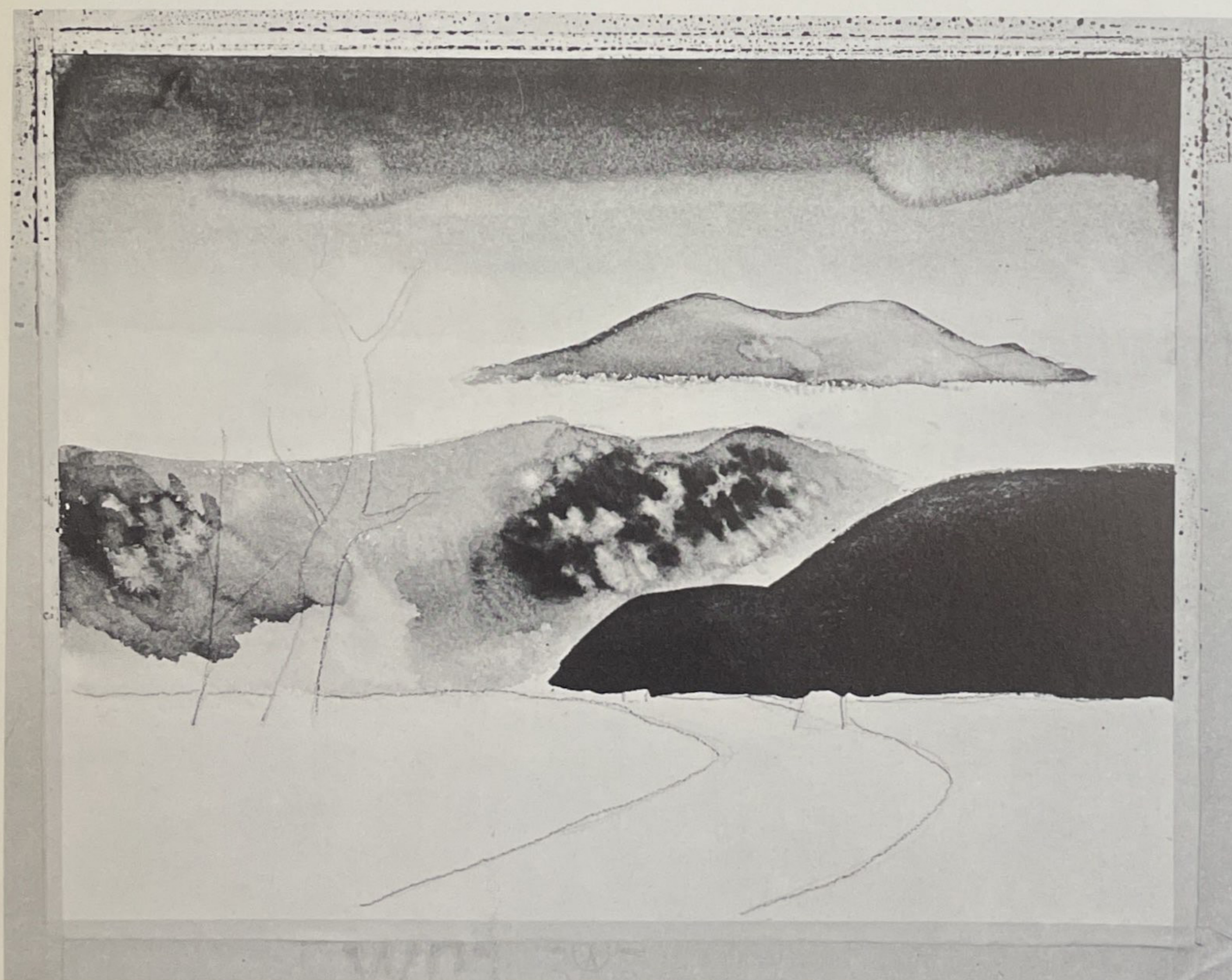
8 The right middle ground hill will be painted very dark with a wet mixture and without wetting the paper first, either on the hill or around it. This hill should be dark to give depth to the picture and contrast with the misty look of the valley and fog area beyond.

**9** When the dark wash has settled, but still is a little moist, clean your large round brush and squeeze out all the water. Then apply it along the upper area, as shown, to lift out some of the dark paint and give the hill shape and form. In a small area of this lightness, lift out most of the dark to make it almost white. This will make the hill look as though the sun were shining on it at this point. Leave enough dark along the crest to keep the hill from merging with the mist beyond.
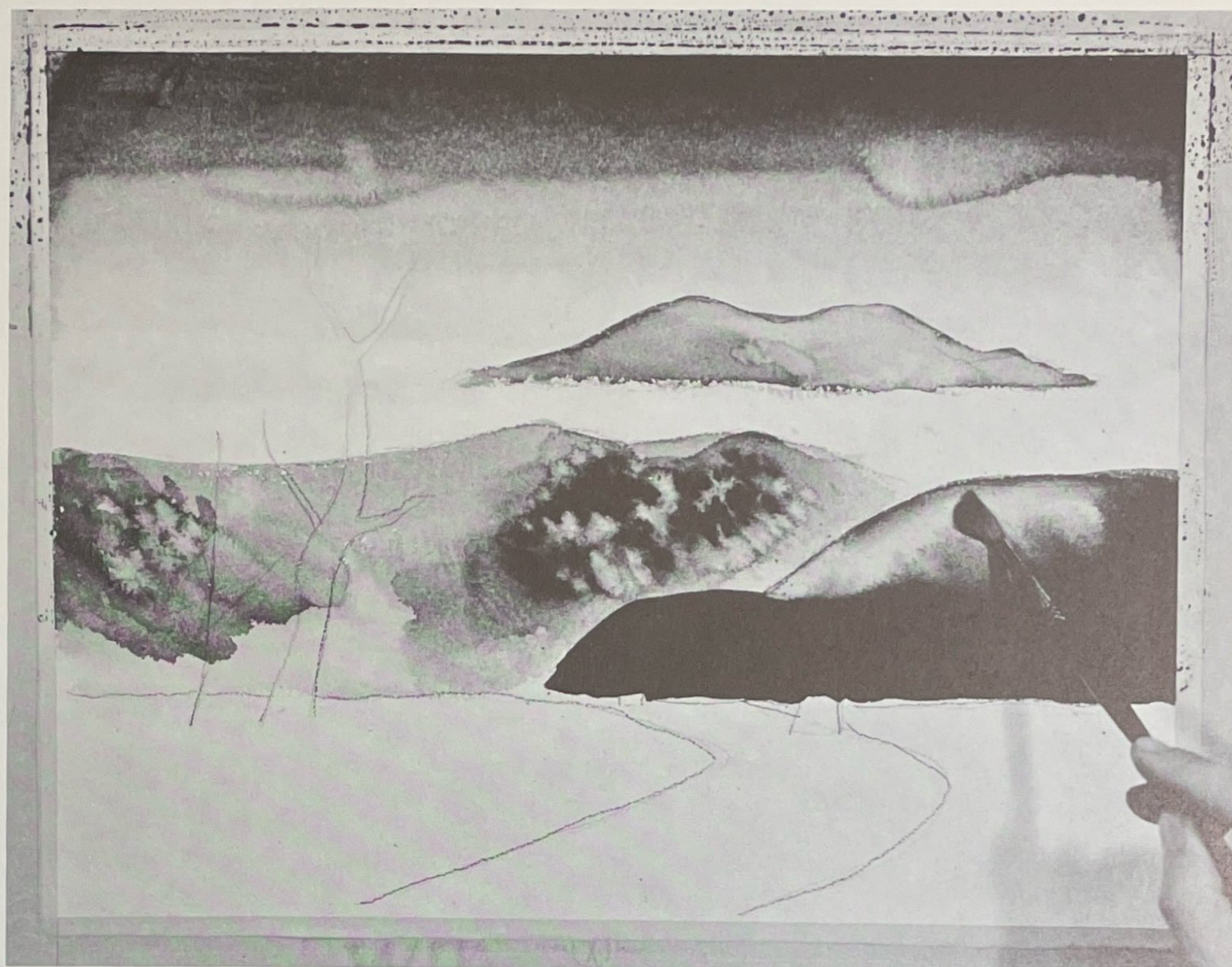
10 Wet the left foreground area — then grade a wet, slightly dark mixture down a little way beyond and around the base of the trees. Now do the same at the bottom, working up lighter into the central wetness. The larger, darker area in the immediate foreground will act as body for growing vegetation, which will be added a step or so later.
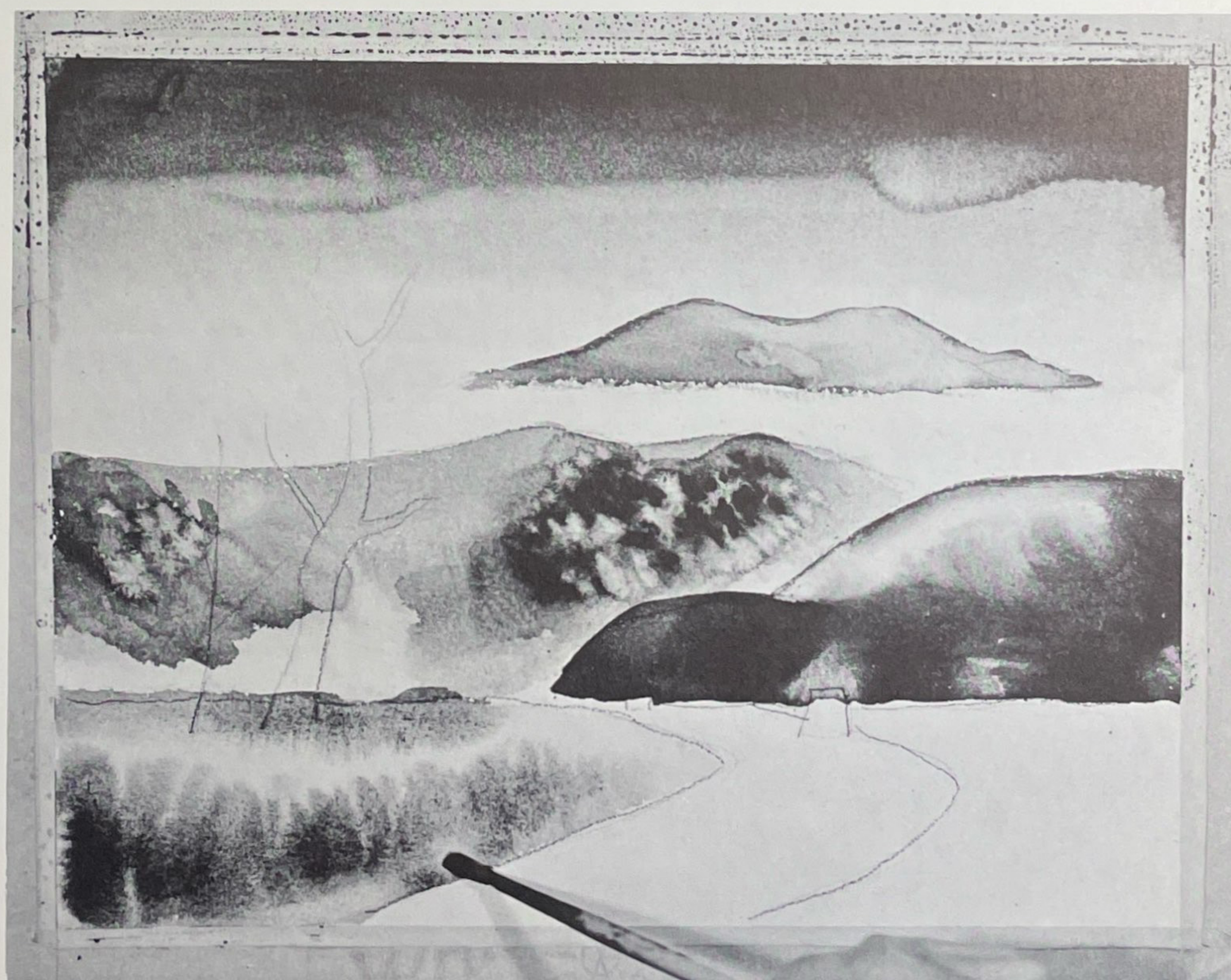
11 The next step will be to paint the right foreground area and the tree trunks. The field and foreground bushes are painted wet-on-wet as shown. The small darker area at the base of the hill tends to connect it with the foreground, while the lighter area in the center gives the field perspective and depth. The dark background for the details of bushes—to be put in later —also adds to the depth of the picture. The tree trunks are painted dark and fairly wet, with a small round brush. Allow all this to settle for a few seconds.

12 Before the tree trunks are dry, some of the color must be lifted out to give them form and texture. Do this with brush cleaned and dried and by blotting with crumpled cleansing tissue. It is important to keep the direction of light in mind so that you may take out most of the color where the light strikes the tree. The smaller limbs and twigs are not put on the trunks just yet.

13 Now begins the process of finishing off the picture. Select a medium-size round brush, fill it with pigment and water; then take out the excess mixture by pulling the brush through a rag. Make the brush come to a ragged, flat edge and, with sweeping strokes, dry-brush the fog area and the road in the foreground, as shown. Place the automobile where it belongs. Such objects make a scene look "lived in." Now is the time to sit back and study your work to be sure that the over-all pattern and values are right. If not, they should be corrected at this point by going over them with the same painting technique as used originally.

14 The little details are put in last. Use a small round brush, fairly dry, and paint in the tree limbs and twigs, the bushes in the foreground, the grass in the middle-ground, and the birds. Notice in the demonstration picture at the right how some of the color has been lifted out of the birds to give them a feeling of lightness. The dark irregular objects in the foreground are rocks. Try to make these look hard and angular. Finishing a picture is the hardest part. Your earlier painting of large areas and objects is done rapidly. As you near the end you must slow down and work carefully and thoughtfully to give the water color that final polish which makes it sparkle and have the spontaneous look which marks a successful picture.
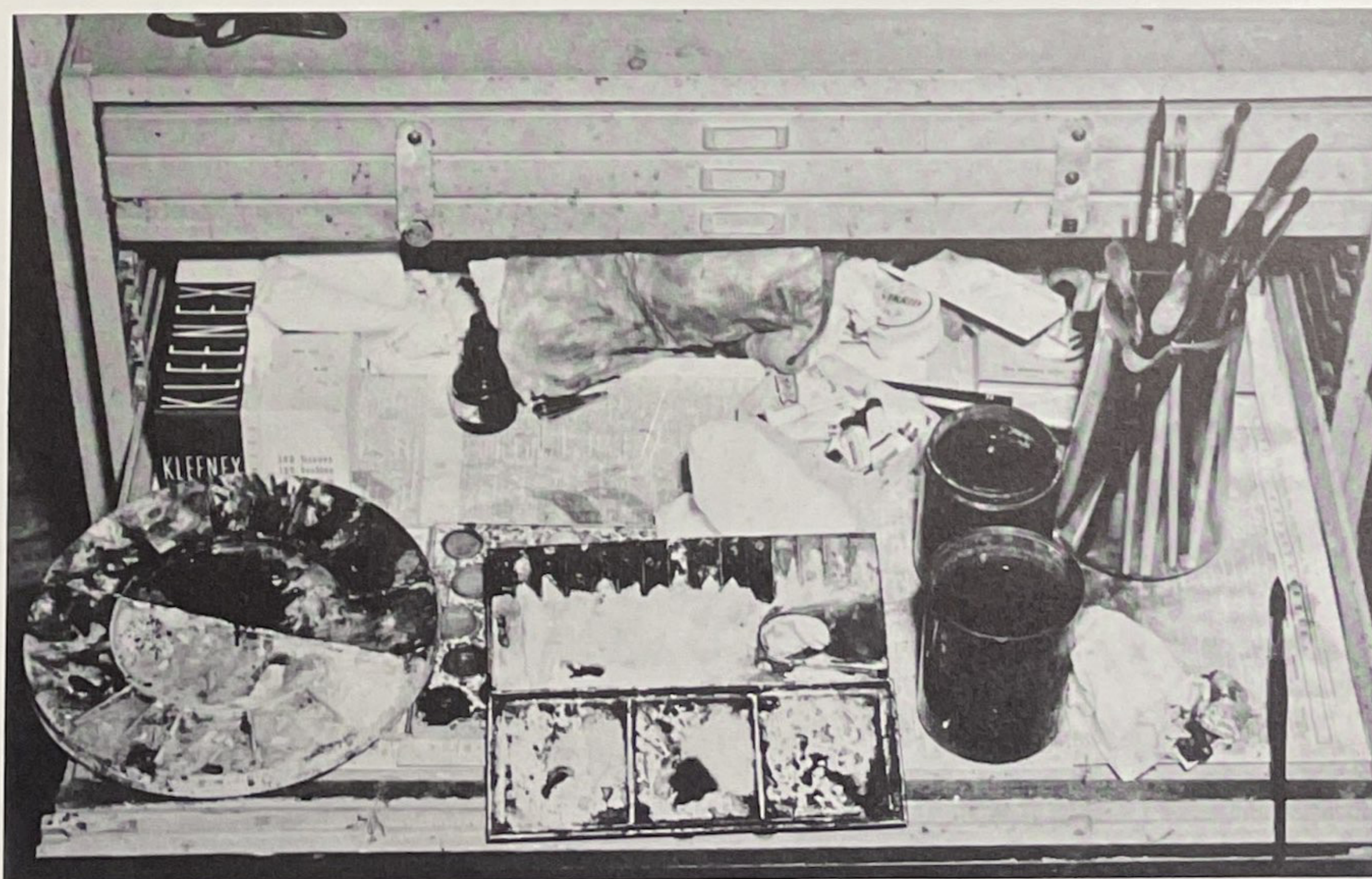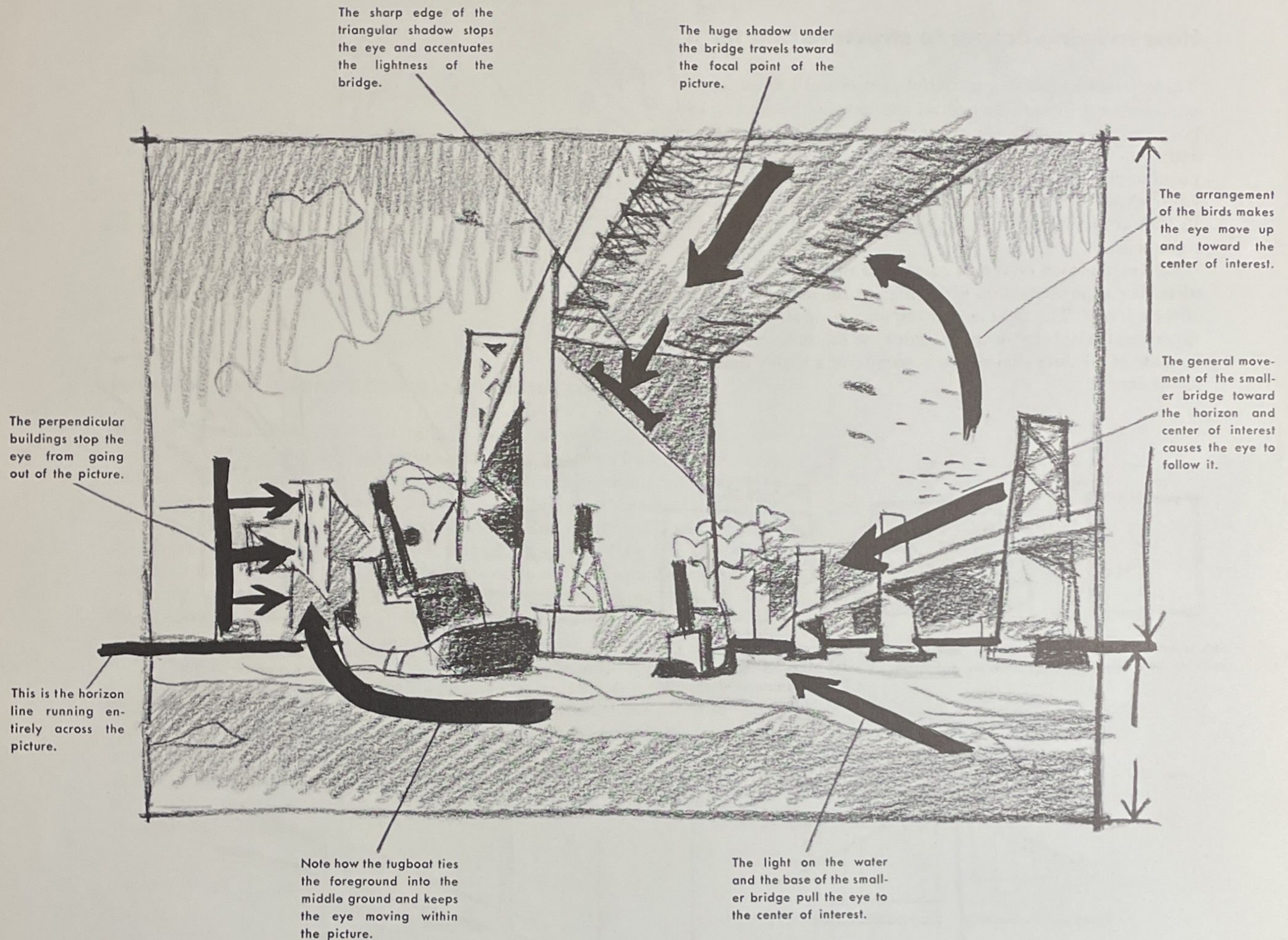
Dong Kingman in his studio — surrounded by painting equipment

I live in Brooklyn, New York, and work at home. My studio is located between my living room and kitchen. When I paint in a large over-all area, I usually stand up in order to use my brush free and unhampered. When painting a small particular area, however, I sit down. In order to turn my water color at any desired angle, I mount my paper on an adjustable drawing board. Notice how all my equipment is close and handy — and arranged as best suits my style of working.

The close-up of my painting equipment on the right is unposed and just as I use it every day — all "sloppy" and comfortable. Note some of the major pieces, such as the useful round palette on the left, just below the tissues used for cleaning, mopping and wiping. Then there's the central folding palette cover box I use at the same time so that I may always have plenty of colors handy. The two water jars are a *must*. I swish out the paint loaded brush in one, then rinse it quickly in the other jar. When hard at work, I refresh these jars often. I find a pitcher or vase very satisfactory as a holder for brushes. They dry nicely that way — tip up and free from pressure. The odds and ends you see in the picture just accumulate, according to the needs of any picture I'm painting.

When I paint at night I use a "daylight" type fluorescent fixture placed so that I get the most light on my work, without glare.

The sharp edge of the triangular shadow stops the eye and accentuates the lightness of the bridge.

The huge shadow under the bridge travels toward the focal point of the picture.

The arrangement of the birds makes the eye move up and toward the center of interest.

The perpendicular buildings stop the eye from going out of the picture.

The general movement of the smaller bridge toward the horizon and center of interest causes the eye to follow it.

This is the horizon line running entirely across the picture.

Note how the tugboat ties the foreground into the middle ground and keeps the eye moving within the picture.

The light on the water and the base of the smaller bridge pull the eye to the center of interest.

How I paint a water color – by DONG Kingman

First I make a preliminary drawing to determine my composition, values and moods. This I may do in pencil, since I do not paint over it to make my finished painting. I only use it to guide me as I develop the final water color, which I first sketch in with a very weak and transparent wash, using black, say, with lots and lots of water, so that I can see plenty of white paper through each and every value.

In making the above preliminary pencil drawing of "The Two Bridges" (which you may see in finished stage on Page 39) I first place my horizon line about a third of the way up in the picture space to make a good balance between foreground and background. Next, I place the large bridge structure near the middle to create a strong and forceful feeling in the upper part of the picture.

Then I pose the larger tugboat in a position to establish a rhythm in the space between foreground and middle ground at the base of the bridge — and to keep the eye moving around the lower left-hand corner, into the composition. The smaller bridge at the right keeps the vision going toward the center of the picture and shows the size and power of the man-made structures — by placing one next to the other.

Now I draw in the background objects, such as distant hills and buildings. Notice how the perpendicular lines of the buildings tend to keep the vision from moving out of the picture at the left. I follow this by drawing in details such as the smaller tugboat — the stop-light at the base of the bridge columns and the flying birds.

I also use the preliminary plan drawing to establish my later values in the finished painting. Notice the pattern of light and dark areas — as well as the middle tones. The foreground dark area adds depth to the picture — since it offers a contrast against the more distant middle ground and forces the eye into the picture and toward the center of interest.

Note the arrows and their directions in the above plan sketch; they and their captions will show you how I try to make every object and area count in turning out a successful painting.

How to bring drama to structure and form

The difference between a successful picture and a failure can so often be a question of thoughtful and imaginative placing and posing of objects, to bring out their most convincing structure and form. A bridge can be a dull-looking shape or it can be posed so that it is a dynamic thing of huge dimension and power. Every object — like a person — has its most fortunate aspect and its least attractive view. It is up to me as an artist to choose the right one.

I try to approach every new painting with the question: "Just what view of my structures will bring out the most striking use of their form?" The right answer can only come after study and experiment, resulting in my selection of the most convincing attitude of all three dimensions — seen from a highly dramatic viewpoint.
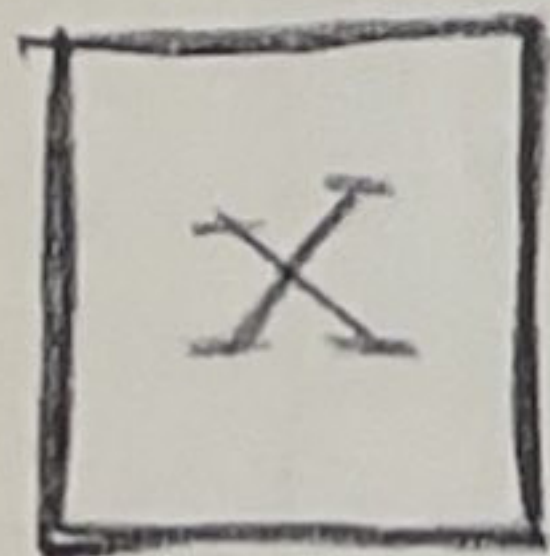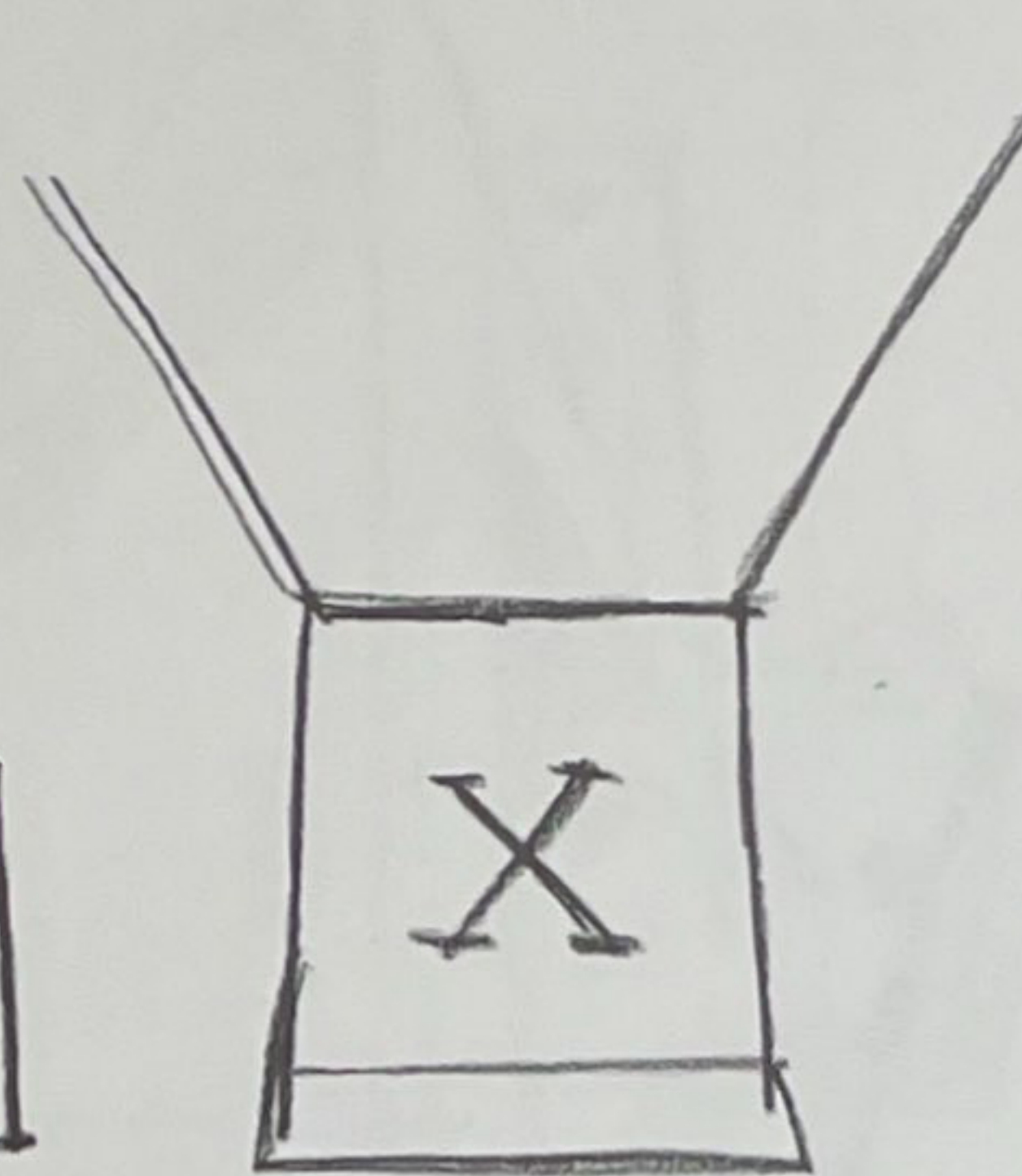

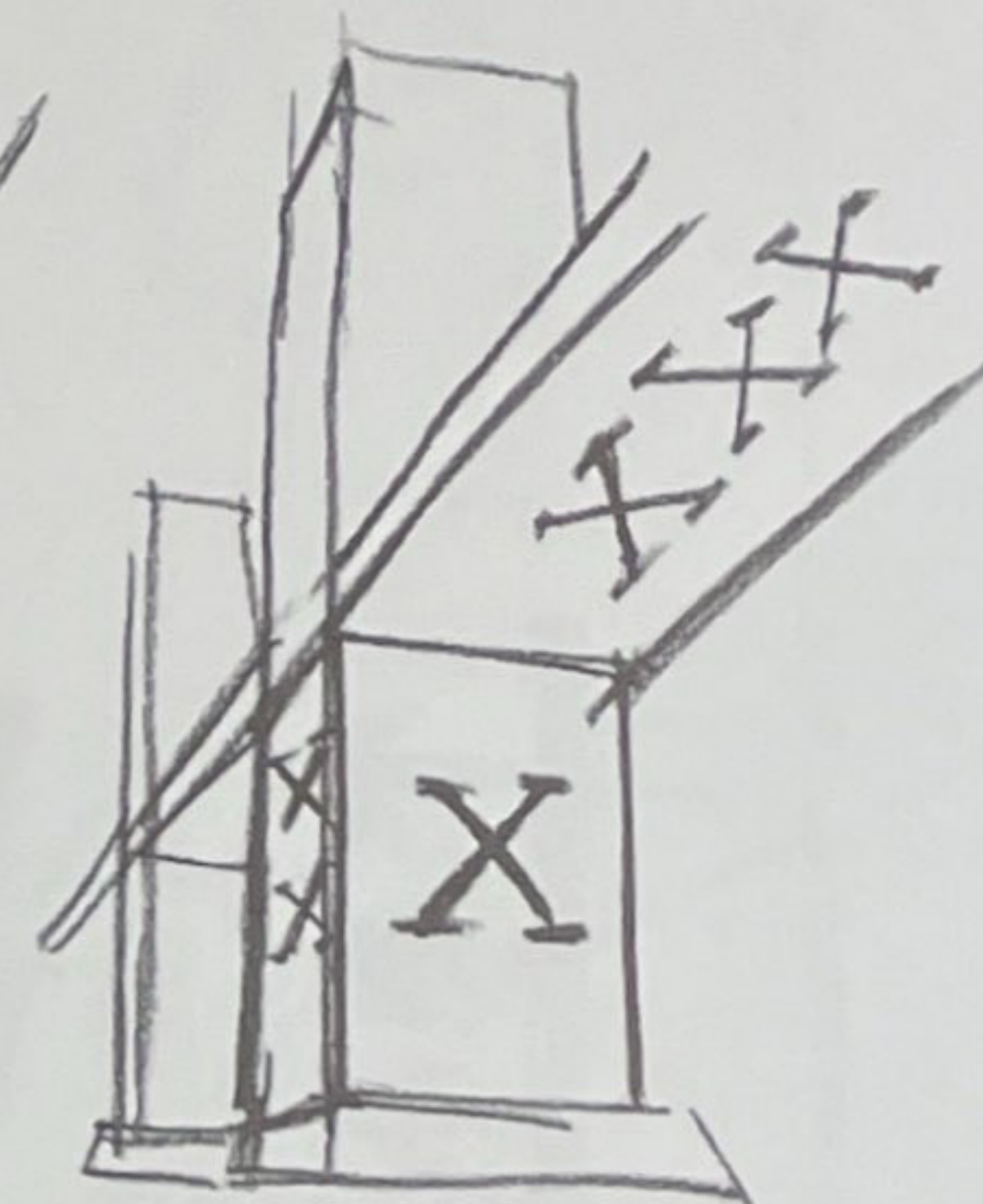This is uninteresting. You can't tell how thick it is.
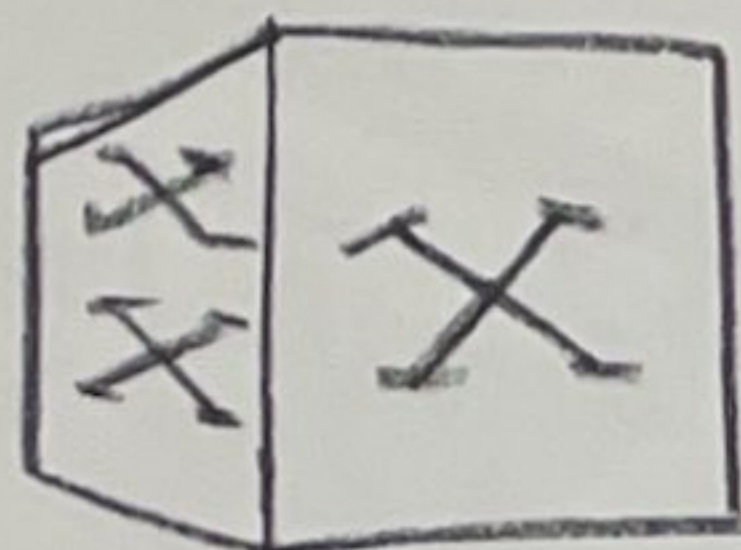
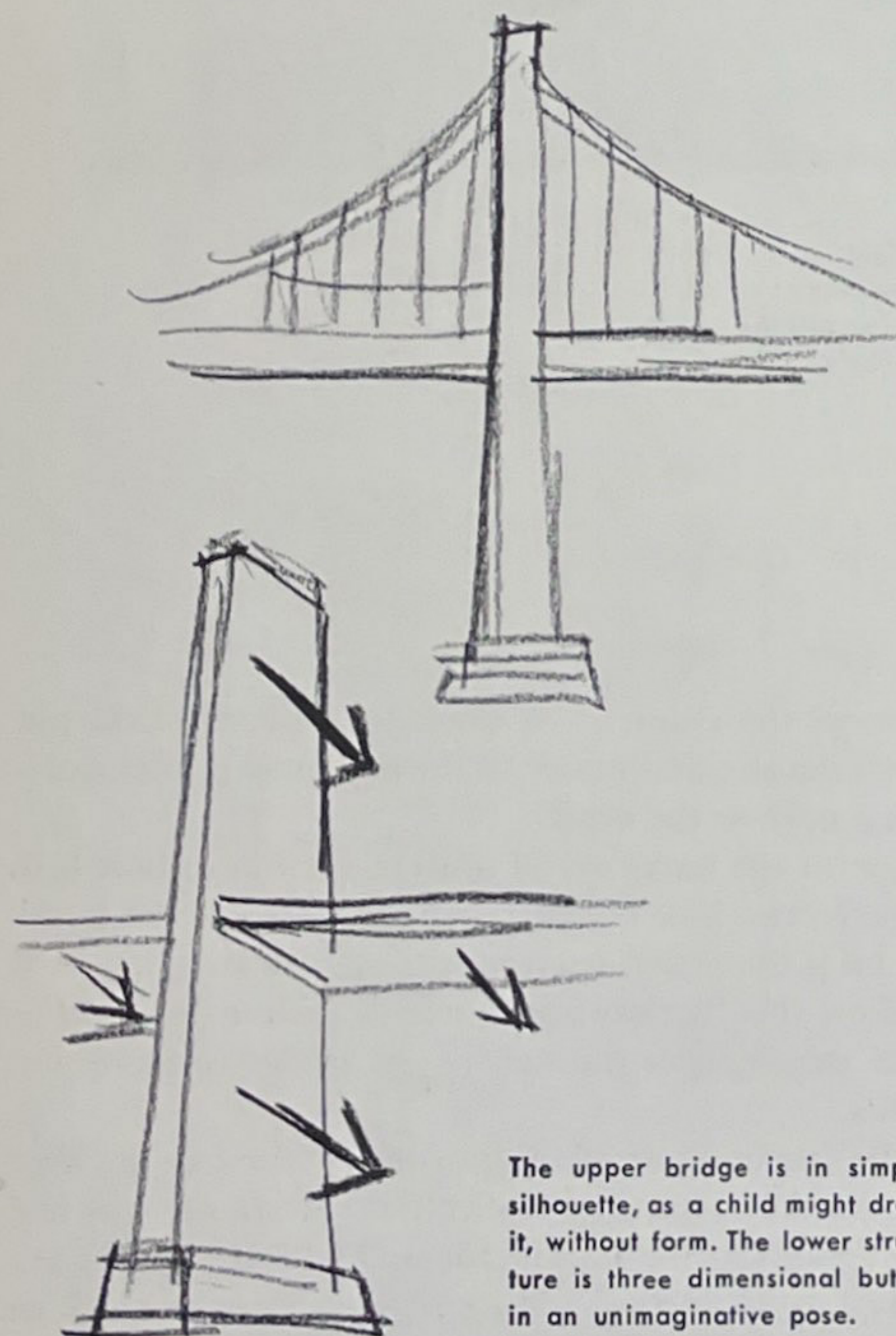This is better. It has thickness and width.
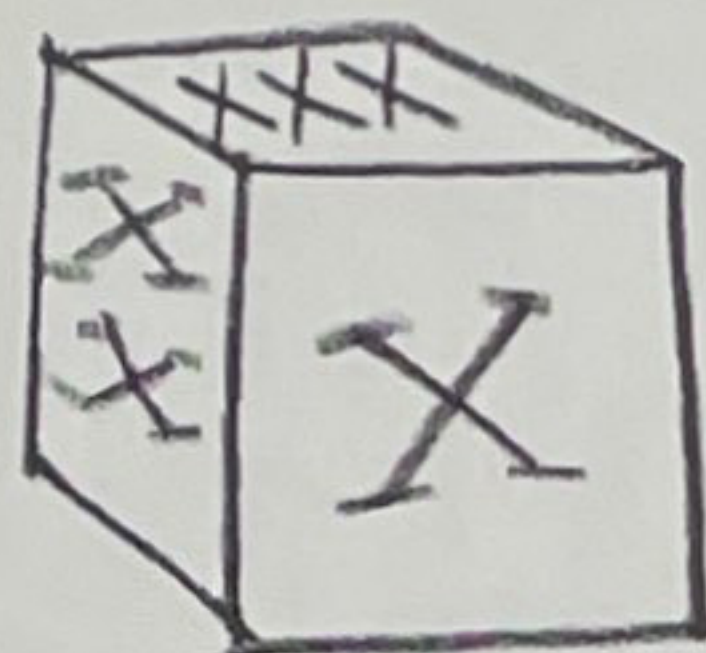
This is best of all because it definitely has three dimensions—height, breadth and thickness.

This is a dull, undramatic view of the bridge. It lacks form.

This view shows three dimensions from a dramatic point of vision. It has form, solidity, power and movement.


The upper bridge is in simple silhouette, as a child might draw it, without form. The lower structure is three dimensional but is in an unimaginative pose.
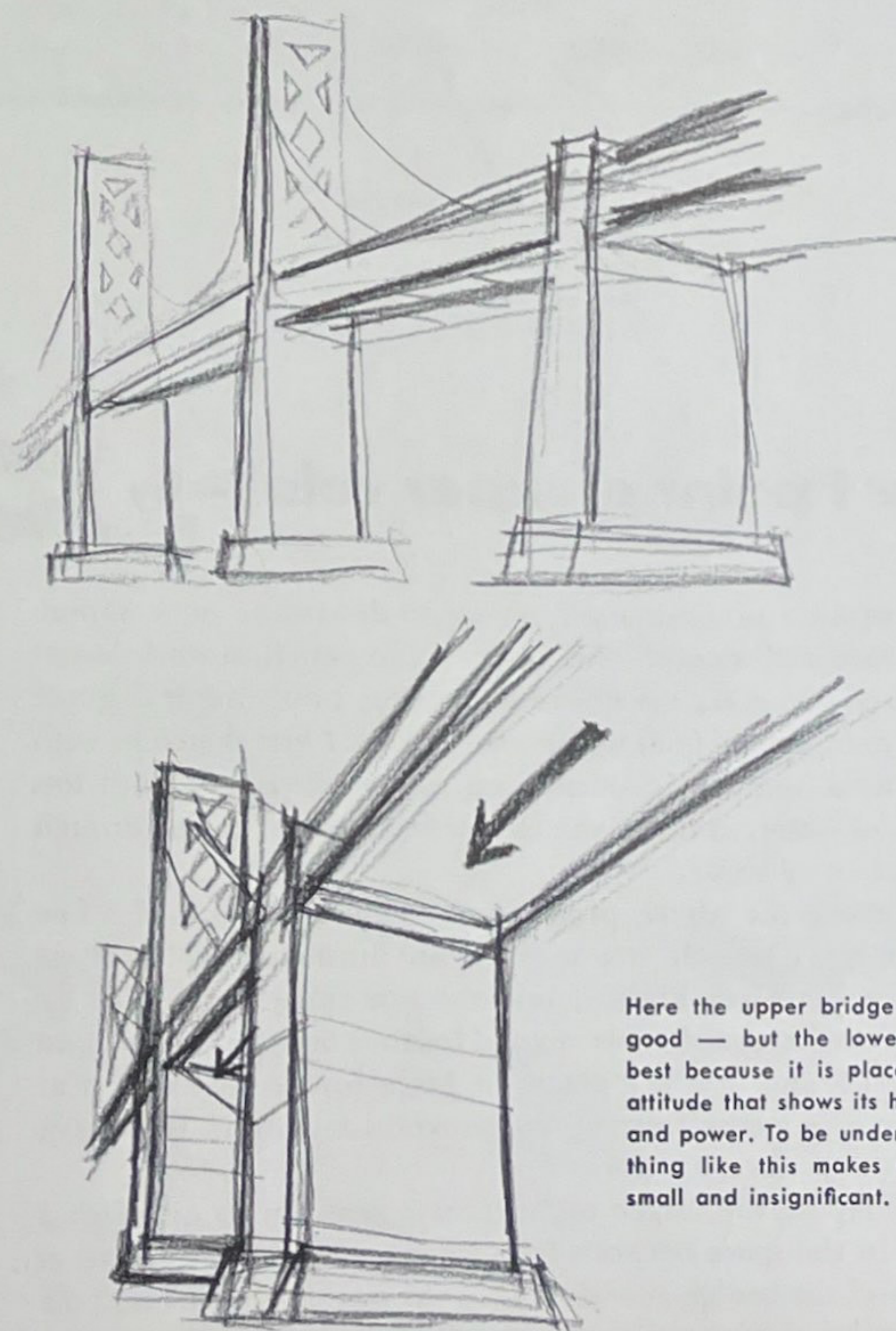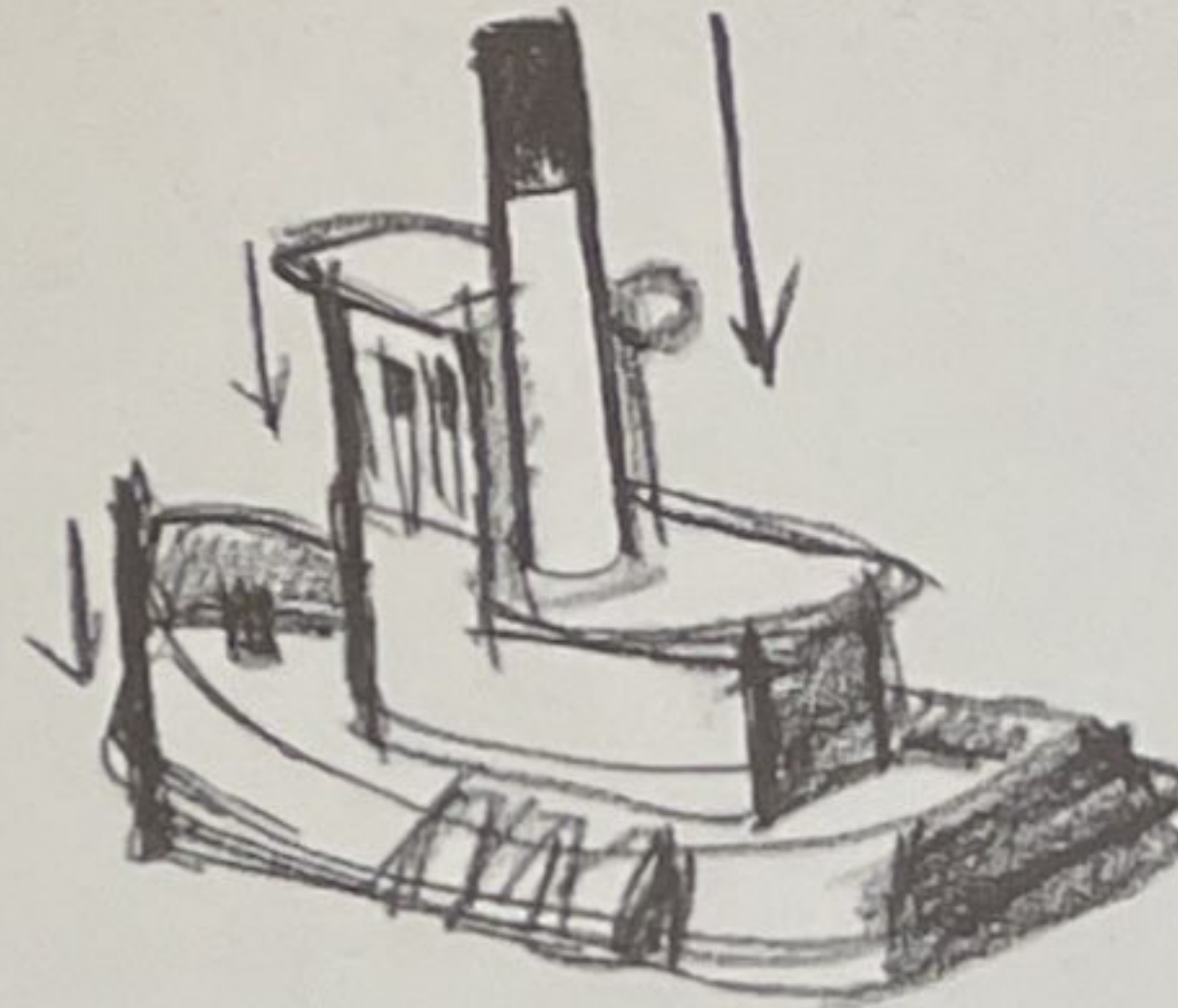

Here the upper bridge is fairly good — but the lower one is best because it is placed in an attitude that shows its huge size and power. To be under a great thing like this makes one feel small and insignificant.
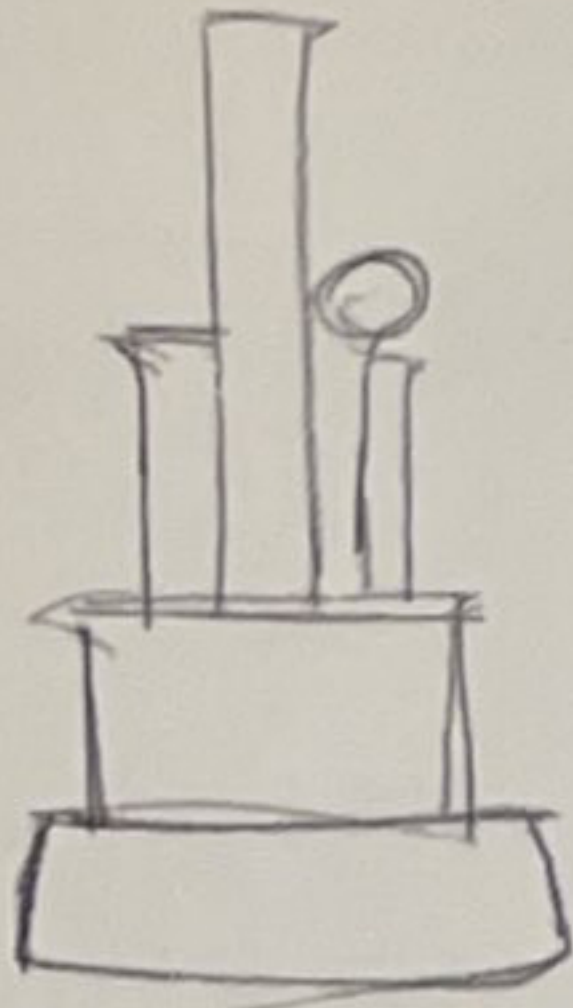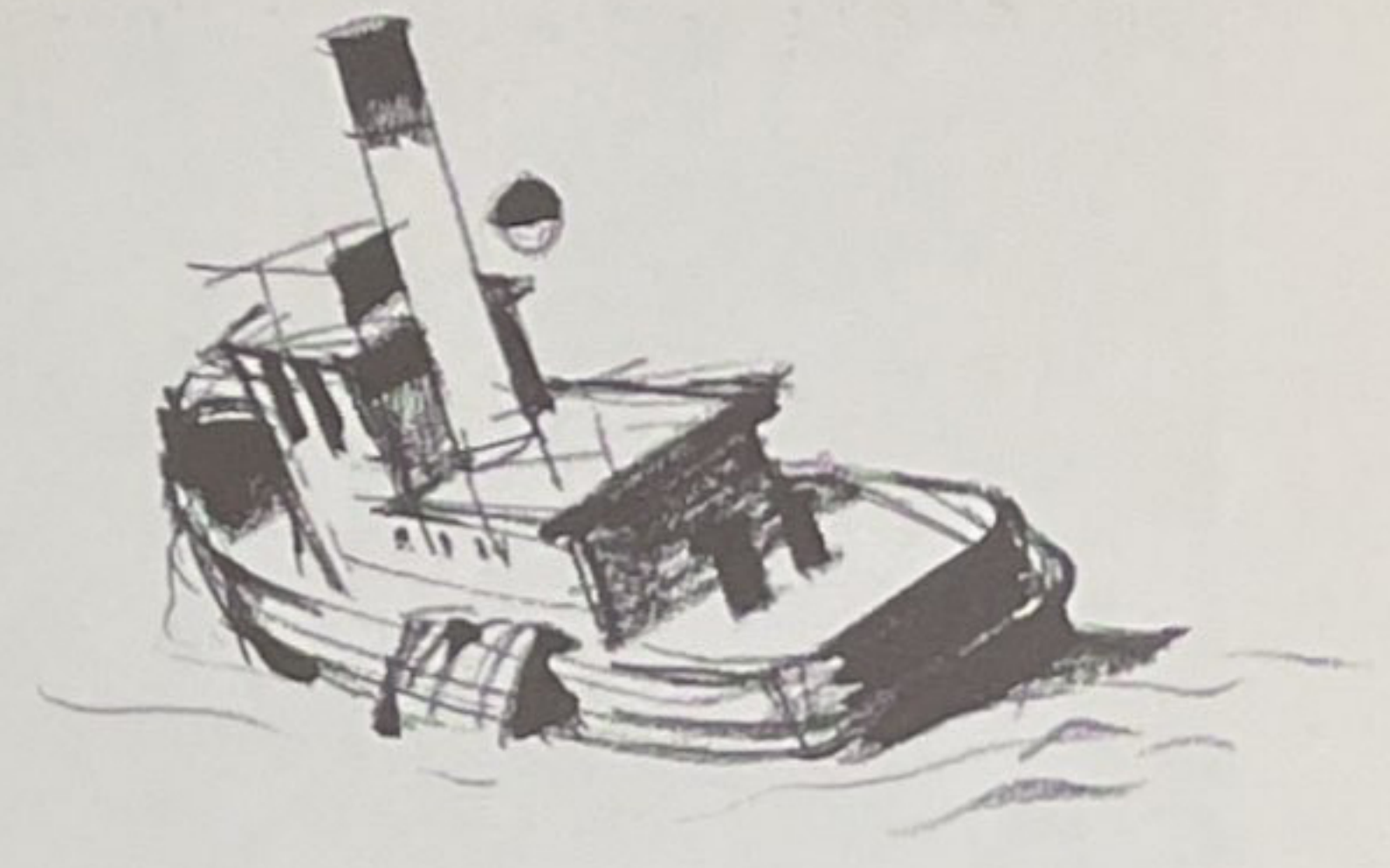
This is a mere outline of a boat's stern view. No interest.
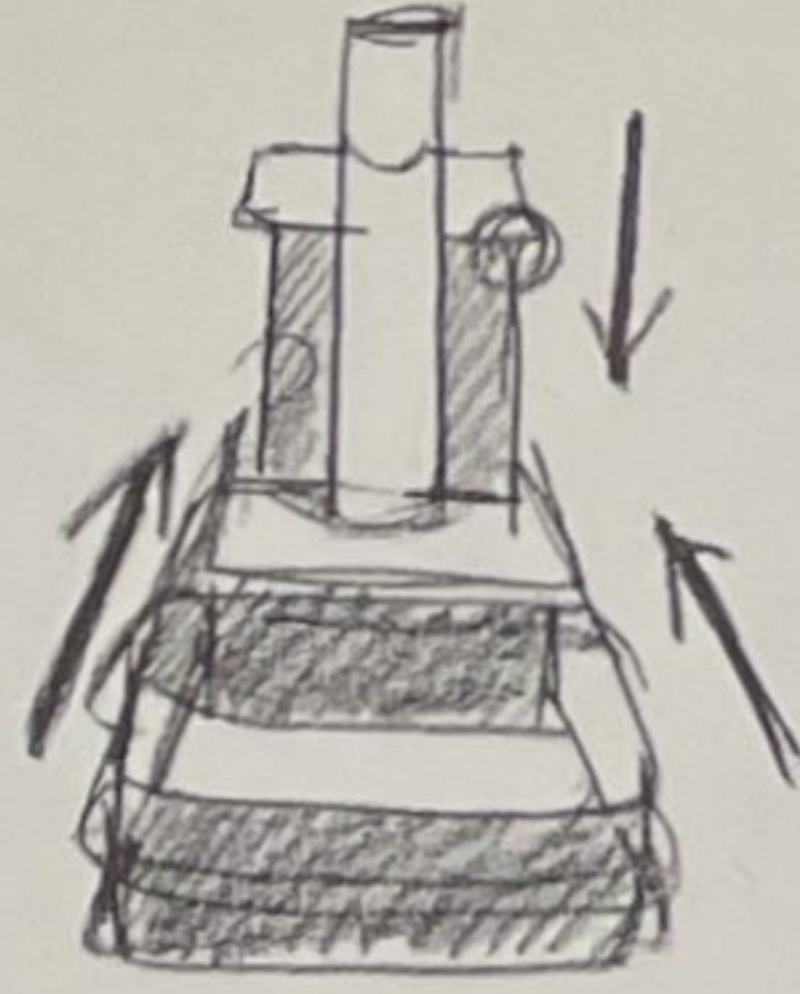
This one has dimension but the angle of view is unpleasing.

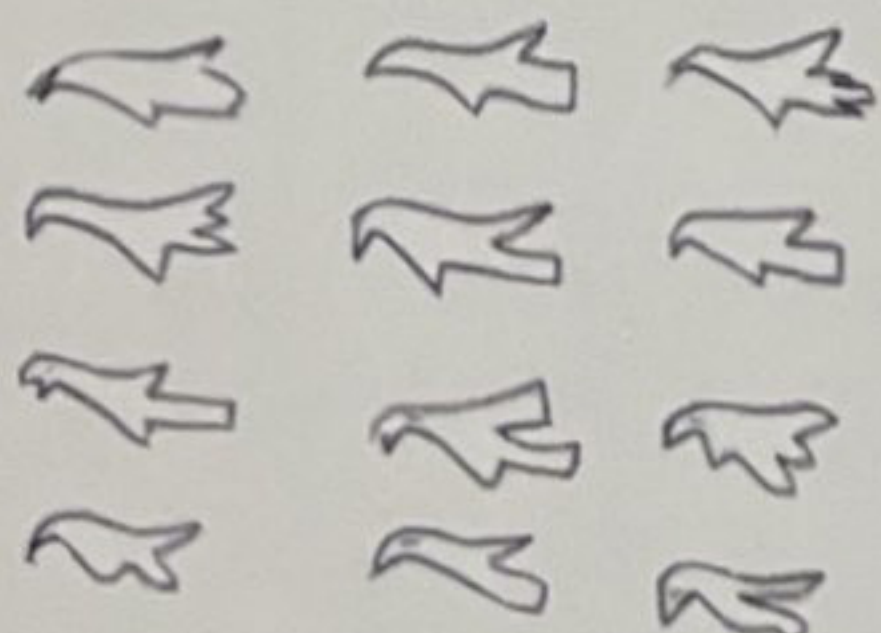Here we have good form and a pleasing view but the boat is static.

The view angle of this boat is just right. It has drama, too, and motion as it tilts and rolls with the waves.

How to give interest to objects in motion

Moving animate objects, such as birds, animals or people, can appear static, stiff and motionless in my picture or I can make them look like the vibrant, living things they are by the way I paint their movements and natural posturings. This can only be done successfully through sound workmanship, resulting from keen observation, experience and imagination. Observe a robin in flight or a group of seagulls floating and dipping over low-tide-water. Or a low flying hawk, a covey of quail bursting from cover — a circling buzzard. These creatures go through intricate patterns of flight — each a fleeting picture of natural movement, the most interesting of which I must capture and mount in my picture as though my eyes were a speed camera.

All this is just as true of moving inanimate objects, such as boats, automobiles or trains. A boat dips, sways and plunges down one wave and into the next like a thing alive. An auto glides, careens around a curve or spins in a skid. A train roars through the night in a cloud of steam, smoke, sparks and swirling dust. I must capture the drama of such things. I must make my painting record the dash and movement of all objects from the most exciting angles or view.

This is only a flat symbol of a boat.

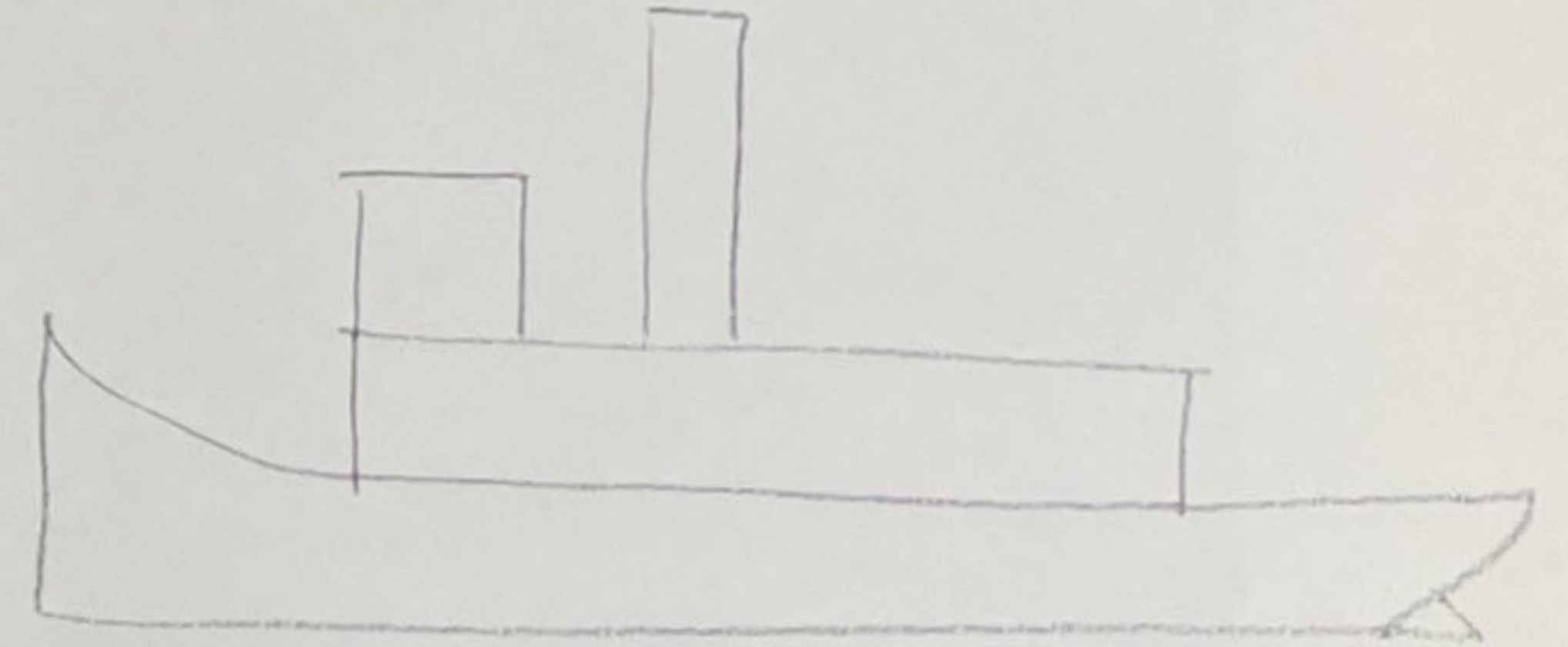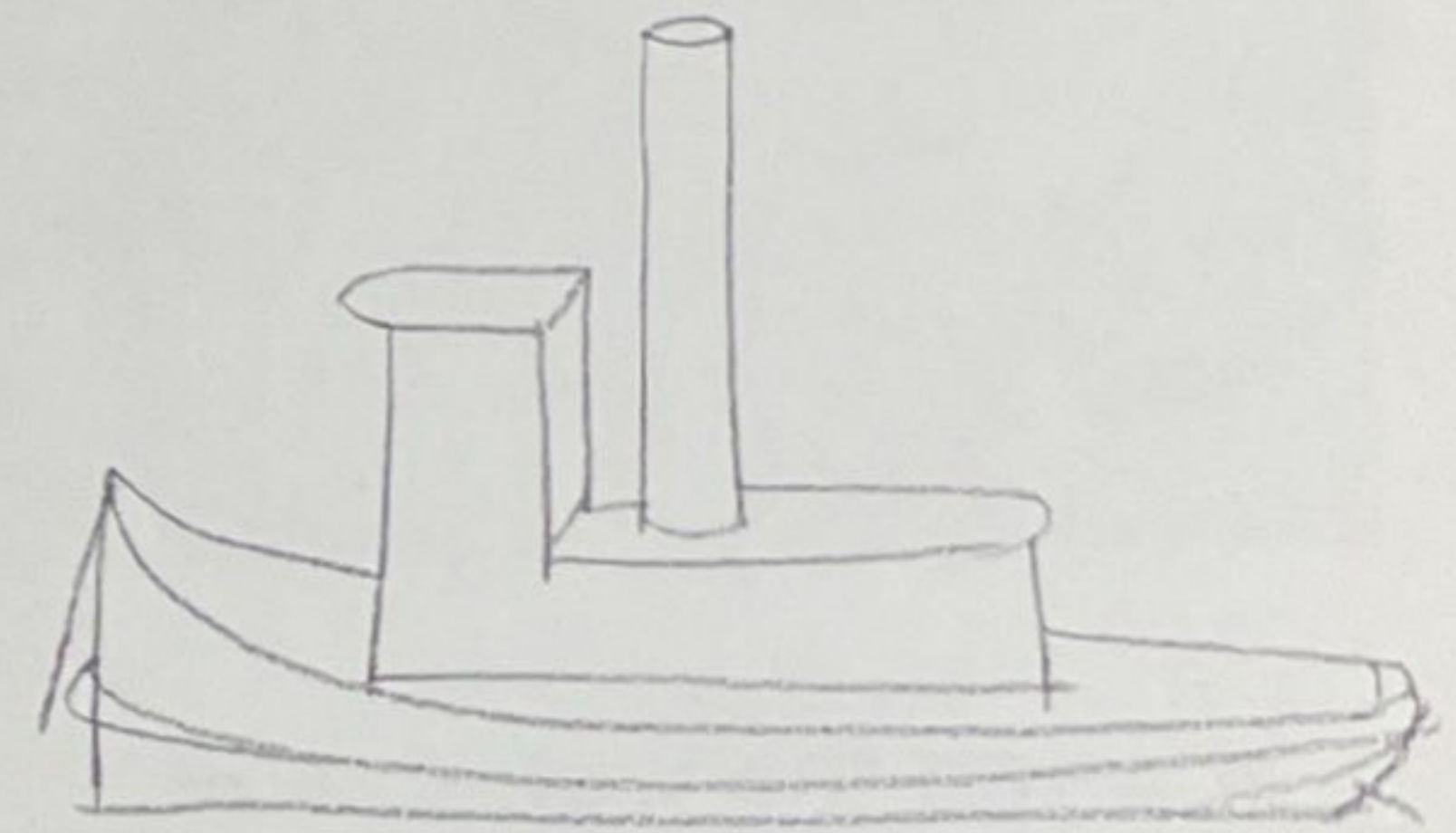Dimension shows up here but it lacks form and interest — no motion.

These two groups of birds are posed in attitudes of flight but they have no form and are in a static geometrical formation.

This group has form, rhythm and space. Also interest and movement.

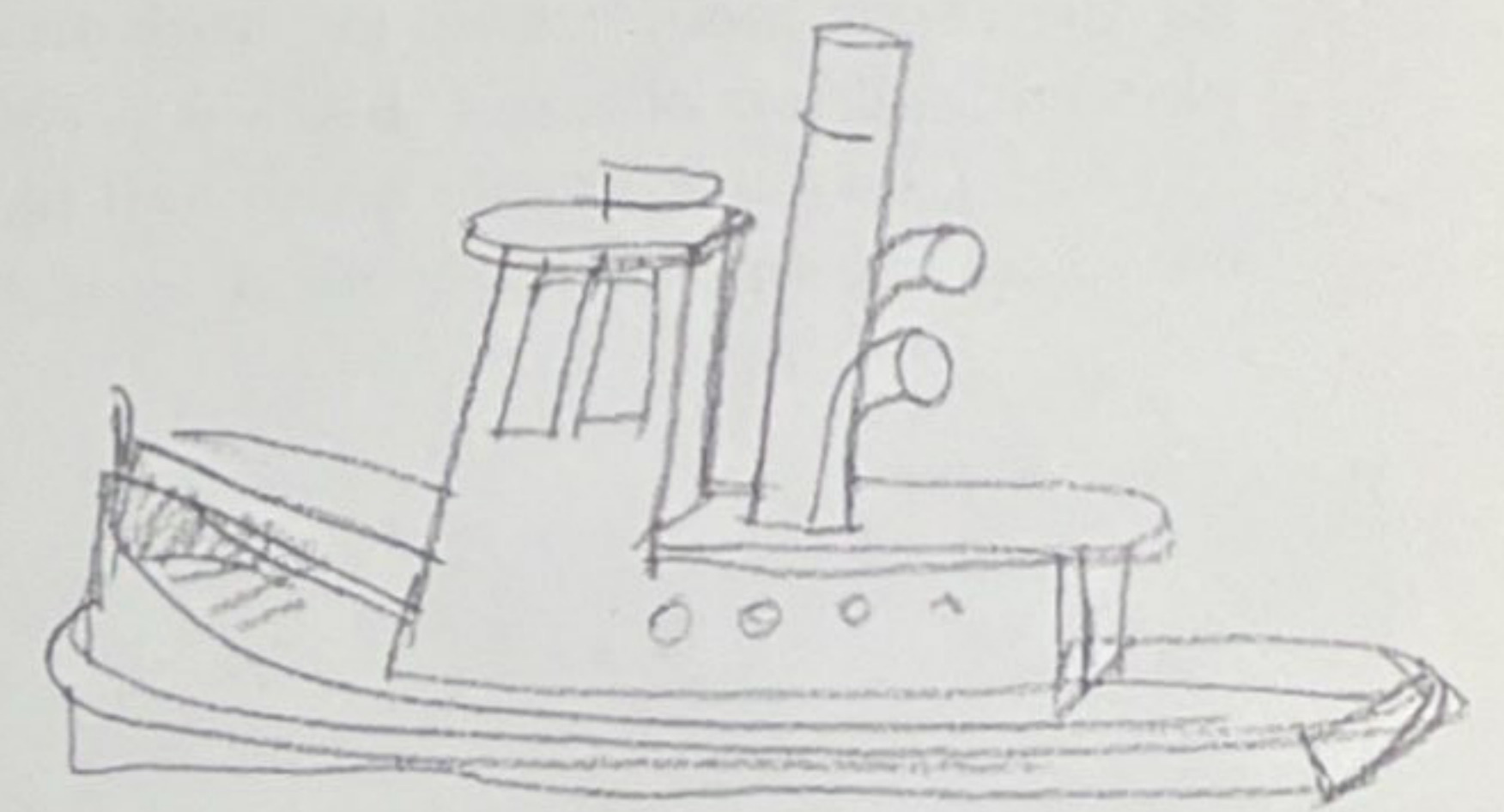Here we have some form; the view angle is good, too, but the boat doesn't look natural.

The objects here are extremely bird-like and show many interesting attitudes of natural flight. They have rhythm and drama, too.
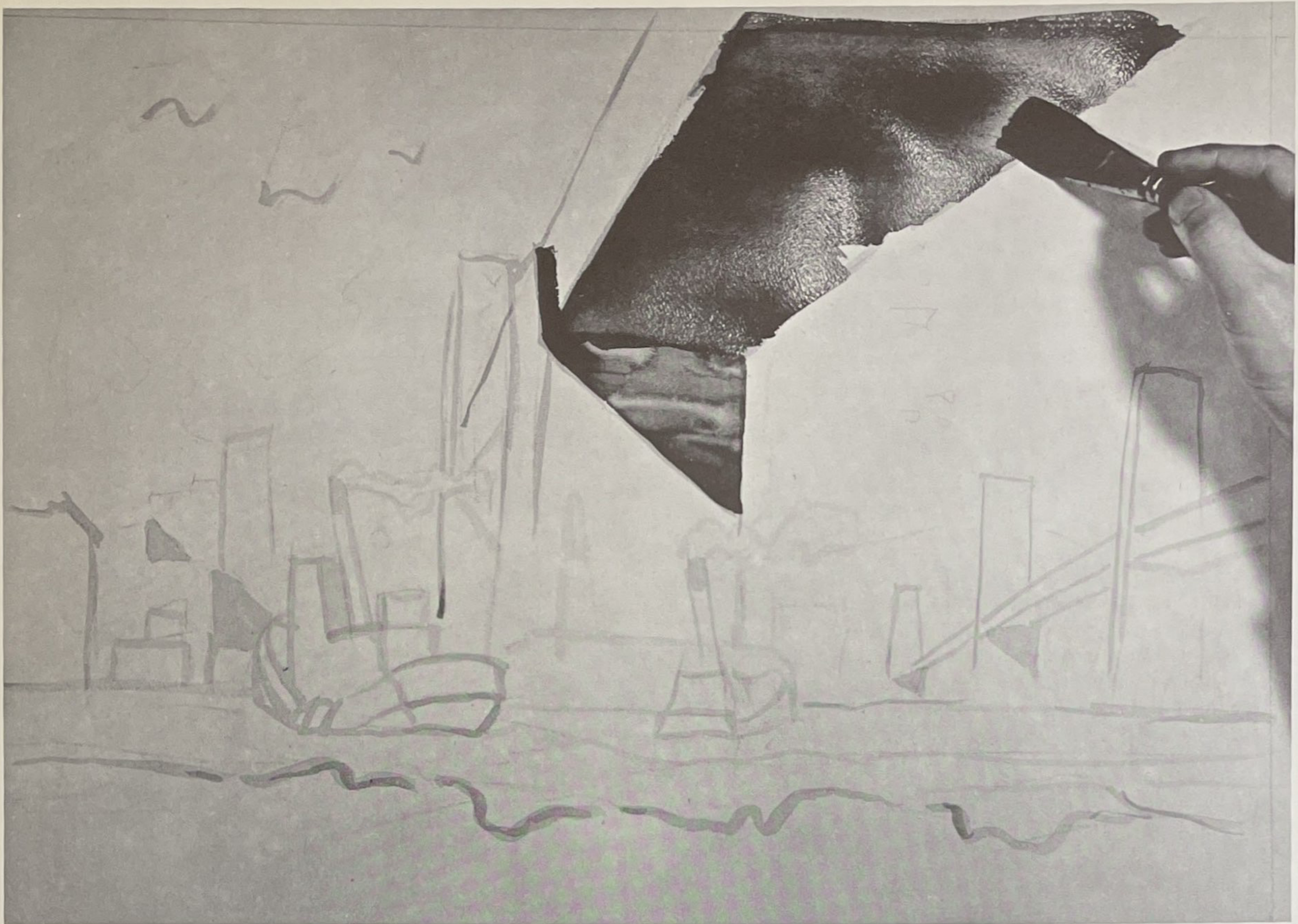

See how this tugboat seems real; it has good form and value pattern. Its position in the water and the blowing smoke make it appear to move.

Starting the water color

I will demonstrate how I went through the various steps in painting "The Two Bridges." Keeping my preliminary drawing always before me, I follow it as I sketch in the areas and lines for the entire picture. I do this with an *ever-so-weak* mixture of pigment and lots of water. Black is usually best.

Then I take a flat sable brush and paint the triangular shadow under the bridge and work it up to the edge of the painting space, as shown.

I select a big brush because the area is large and I want to paint it quickly. I start with this shadow because it is near the center of interest of the picture and gives me something with which to measure all other values that I paint later. The color of the shadow area is a dark gray-green, made by mixing black and burnt sienna with dark green.
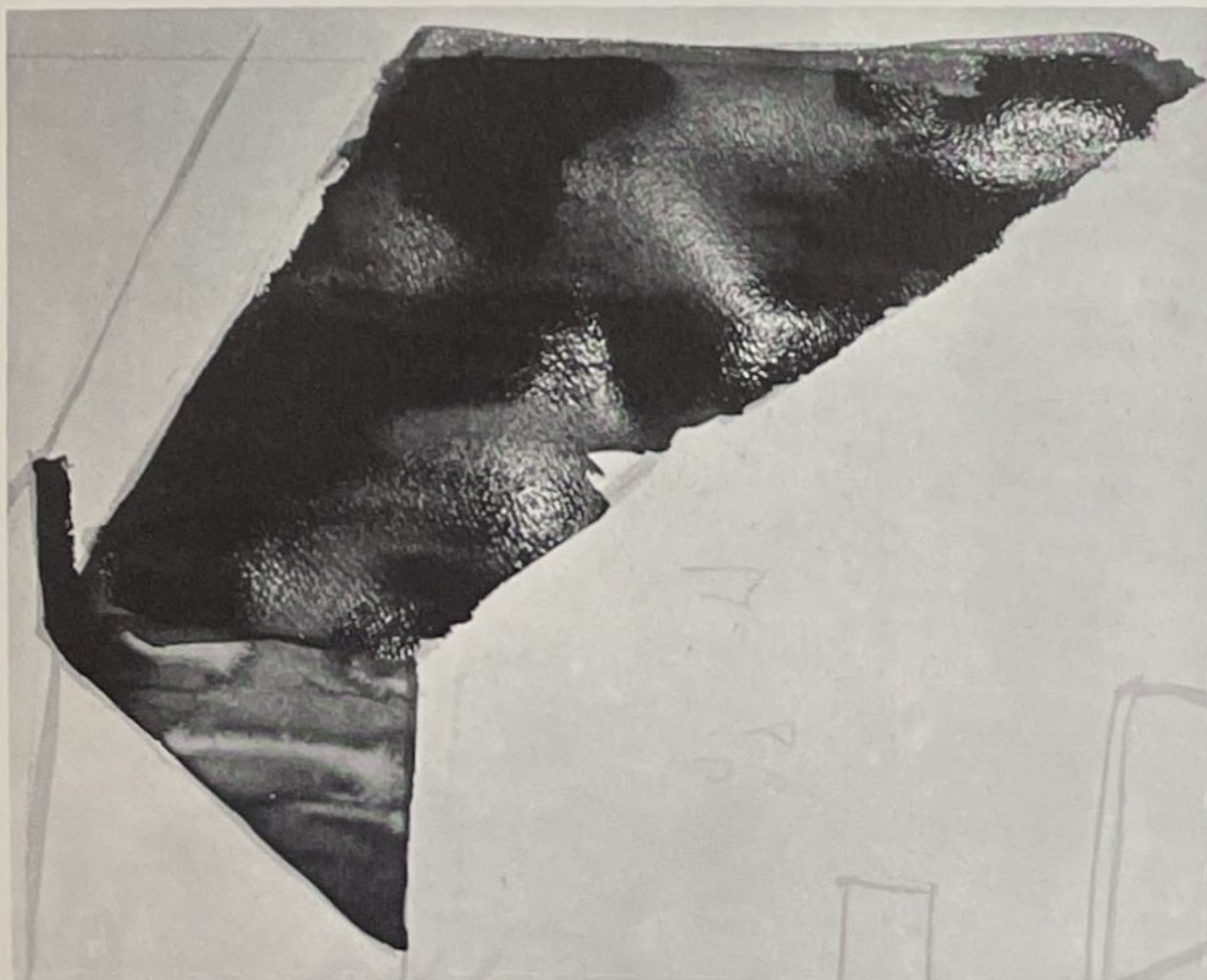
After the gray-green wash has dried a little I use a small brush and put in a few strokes of dark brown near the top of the shadow. I use the brush almost dry with plenty of pigment in it.
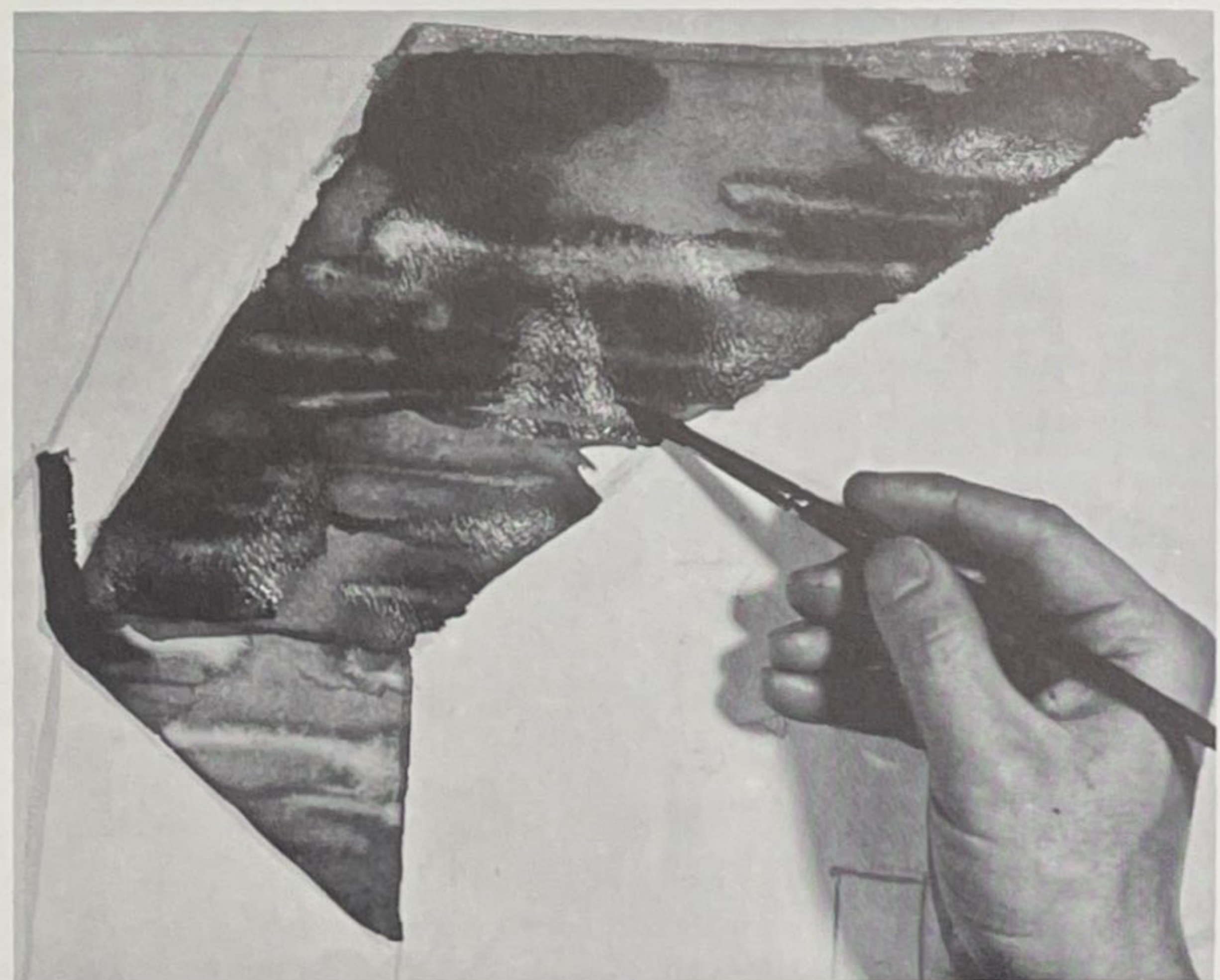
Then I wait a few seconds more and — before the area is dry — clean my little brush and, using the water left in it, make a few wet lines.

Painting the tugboats

I look at my preliminary study and follow it in painting the two tugboats playing together like children at the feet of their mother — the bridge. I treat them as a center of interest. I try to give them the feeling of movement that was planned in the sketch.

For tugboat colors I first paint the simple areas of the hulls in various browns, the shadows in gray-green and the stacks red.
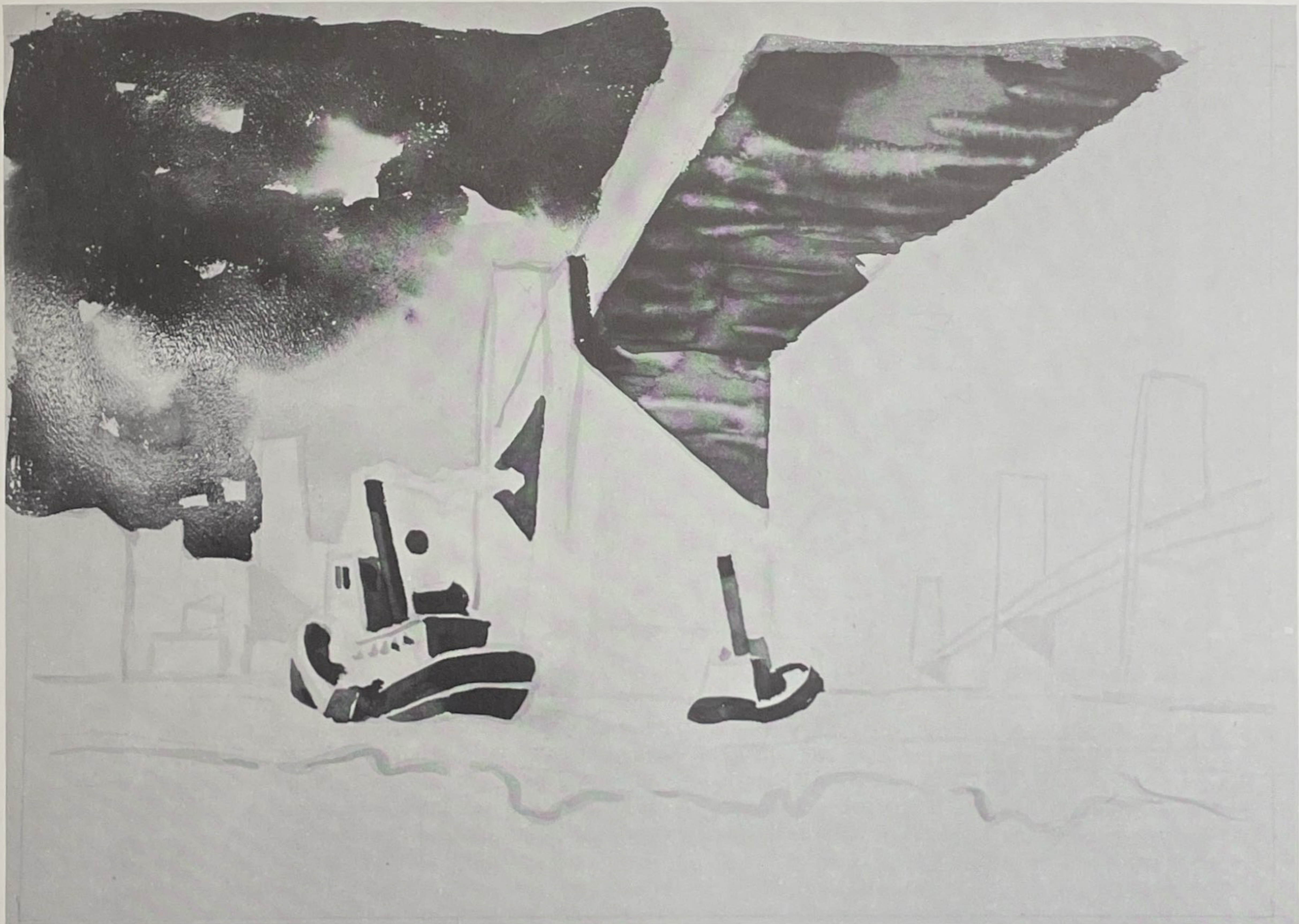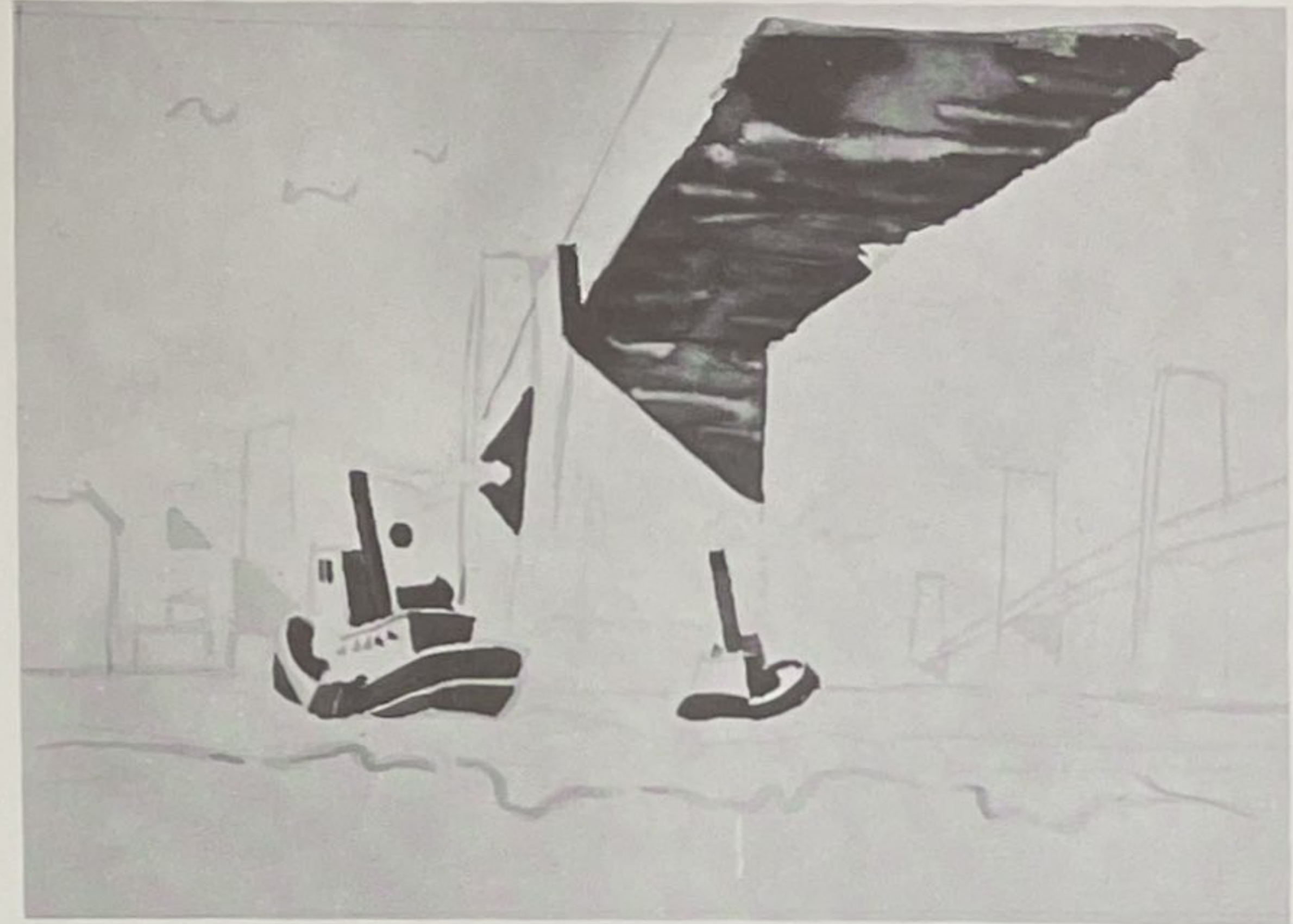
From this stage on I will place shapes, colors, air and so on around them. Later on I will paint in the details of the boats, including their smoke.

Painting the sky

I paint the left side of the sky first. It is good to paint one area at a time like this if the picture naturally divides itself up into parts to allow for this technique. Fortunately in this case the bridge divides the sky into two parts. Because the area is large I use a large brush and first wet this section of the paper all over, being careful not to run over the edge of the bridge — otherwise the sky will "bleed" into it. Then into this wetness I apply yellow and bright red down low near the tugboat, buildings and bridge. I leave space for the white smoke later. The paper begins to buckle with the wetness; I put in more thumbtacks around the edge. Now goes on the dark purplish color for the stormy area — leaving here and there a few small light tones to come through. Now I let it settle for a few seconds.

Next I create the darker shades with a big round sable brush, holding lots of pigment and very little water. This dry brush technique works well on a wet surface. Now I watch it dry.

Note the wavy arrows I have put into the left part of the sky below.
These are to show you the general direction of the brush strokes
I used in painting the left sky and described on page 33.
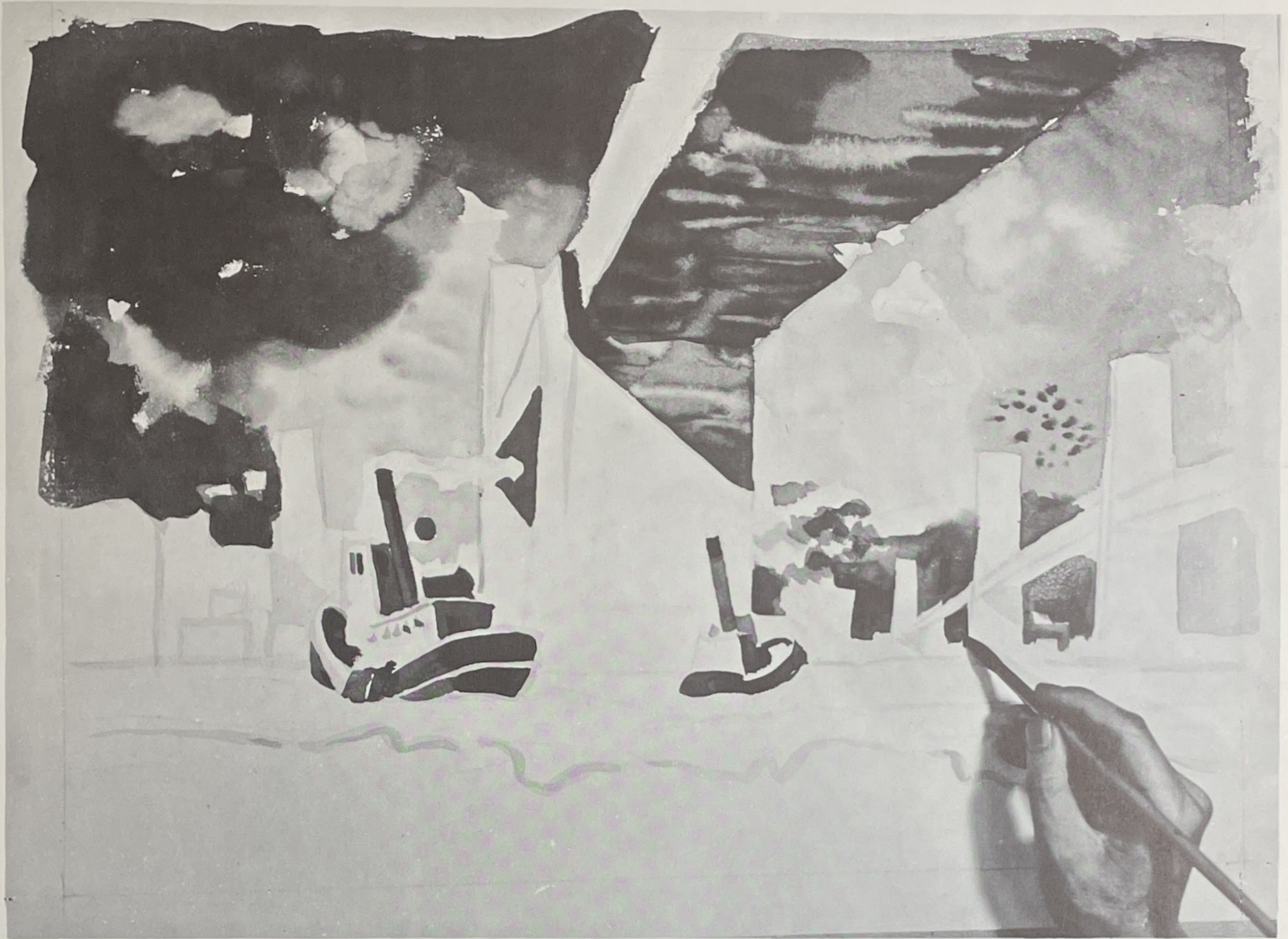

Painting the sky (cont'd)

The principle of painting the right-hand sky is the same as used in the left. Wet the area well with the big brush, then mix the pigment and water and go to work. We must realize that it is all one sky with a big bridge silhouetted in front of it. Therefore, the same general tones and colors must show up in both areas to make them appear to be a single big space of sky, as though the bridge wasn't there.

Following this principle I carry the same color and tone of the right edge of the left area into the left edge of the right area —across the bridge—then blend this into the lighter tones of the center part. This makes for a pleasing balance of tone and color, since I repeat the yellow, red and purple used on the other side of the bridge.

I use the same step-by-step procedure as I did with the other part of the sky. That is — wet first, then apply the colors, leaving a few little white spots on the paper in which to place my group of flying birds. I paint around these spots as fast as I can so that none of this part of my painting will dry before I have done it all. This is to make the background of sky behind the birds seem to be clear, natural and unmottled.

Before this sky area is all dry, I must put in the little red and blue dots over the smaller bridge. These are flying birds in the distance. I will allow these to "bleed" into their surrounding sky, so that they become rather hazy; otherwise they would look too stark and close up. I use this same technique in painting the smoke of the smaller boat and the hill beyond. That is, I paint quickly around the small areas, and before that is dry, change to a smaller brush and paint in these lesser parts. Thus I get a softness at the edges that is pleasing and makes the whole water color have a feeling of unity.

Painting the sky (cont'd)

Large sky areas are hard to paint and control — especially when painting outdoors. That's why I prefer to make sketches and notes outdoors, then go back to my studio and paint the finished picture there.

If the sky is the center of interest I paint it first and balance all other objects in the picture with it. Most often, however, the sky is not the center of interest but is a background for the objects up front. Under such conditions I paint the sky after my center of interest has been established. This way I can make it set off the interesting subjects in the middle and foreground.

Another reason I do not paint the sky first is that it must be made to harmonize in tone and color with the foreground matter. It must act as a setting — and one does not make the perfect setting for a jewel until one first has the jewel.

Sky colors set the mood of the day or night. On a clear pleasant day the sky is bluest of blues. If one can paint it bluer even than it appears to be, the day can be made to seem more clear and pleasant than it is actually. Say you are painting a night time scene — a night when the stars show through clear and sparkling. Under these conditions the black sky has a "bright" quality — if that can be said of a night sky. You can increase this mood of "bright" blackness by your selection and mixture of pigment. Thus one must always be ready and eager to improve on nature. That is why paintings are more vibrant and imaginative than colored photographs.

One would normally think of a gray day as being all one gloomy monotone. By observation I find that so-called gray days are full of subtle, muted colors. Even reds, yellows, greens and browns — not pure, of course, but grayed down or muted to match the mood of the elements.

While all the area showing beyond the distant, smaller bridge is not sky, I paint it now as though it were sky, because it is so far away that it merges into the general upper background and acts as a setting for this mate to the larger bridge.

These large sky areas are painted, in the main, with a bigger brush, as I have said. However, occasionally I shift to a smaller one to use in nooks and corners and small spots within the larger area. One's judgment must be the guide.
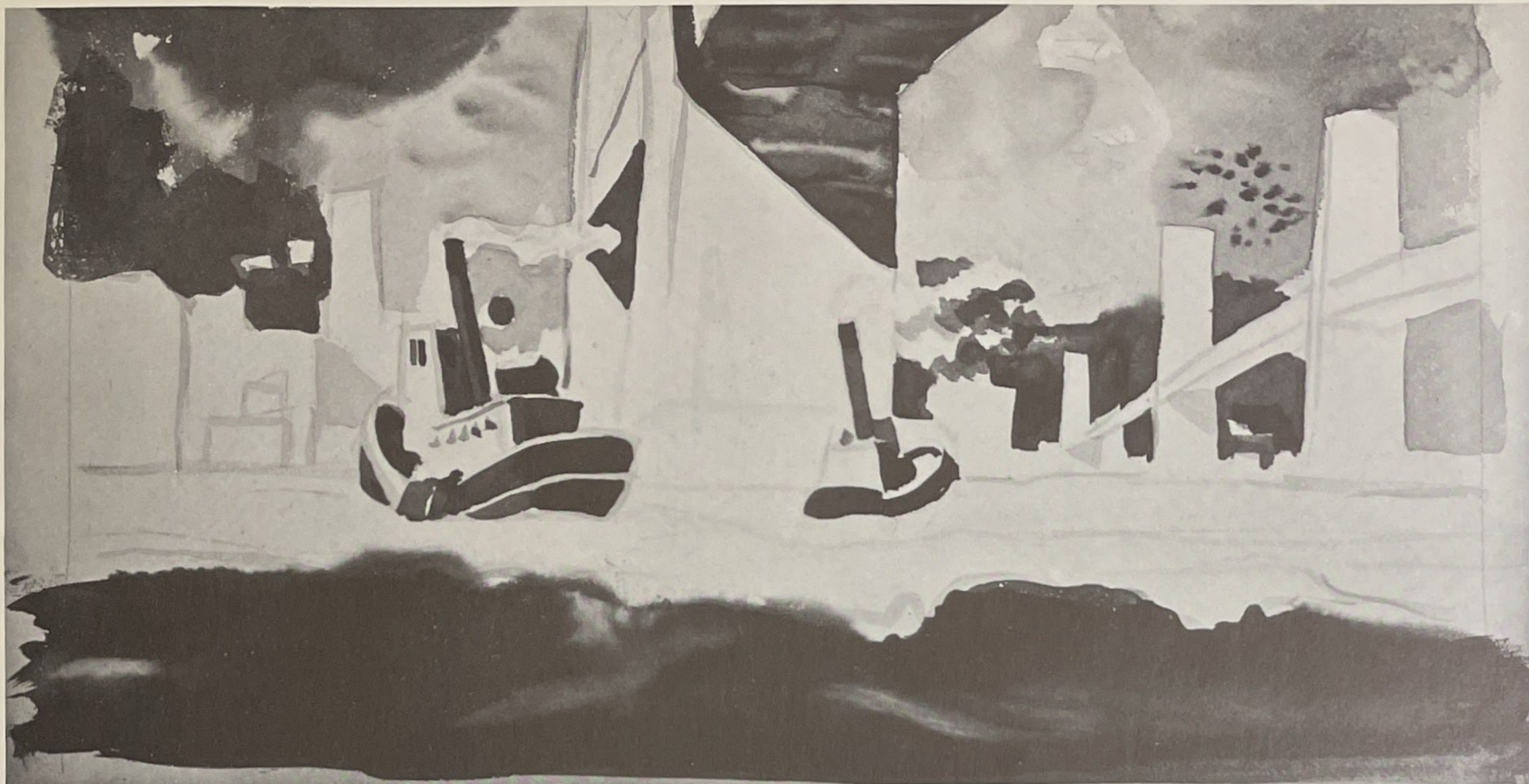
The foreground

I use a large round brush to paint the stormy sea in the foreground — and employ the same step-by-step technique as with the sky. Where I want soft edges, I wet the paper, then mix my pigments and paint the water all over with dark blue and black.

Then I add here and there a bit of green, burnt sienna, alizarin crimson and black with a smaller brush. Some of the dark tone is taken out with a slightly moist, clean brush. The wavy arrows in the picture below show my brush stroke direction.
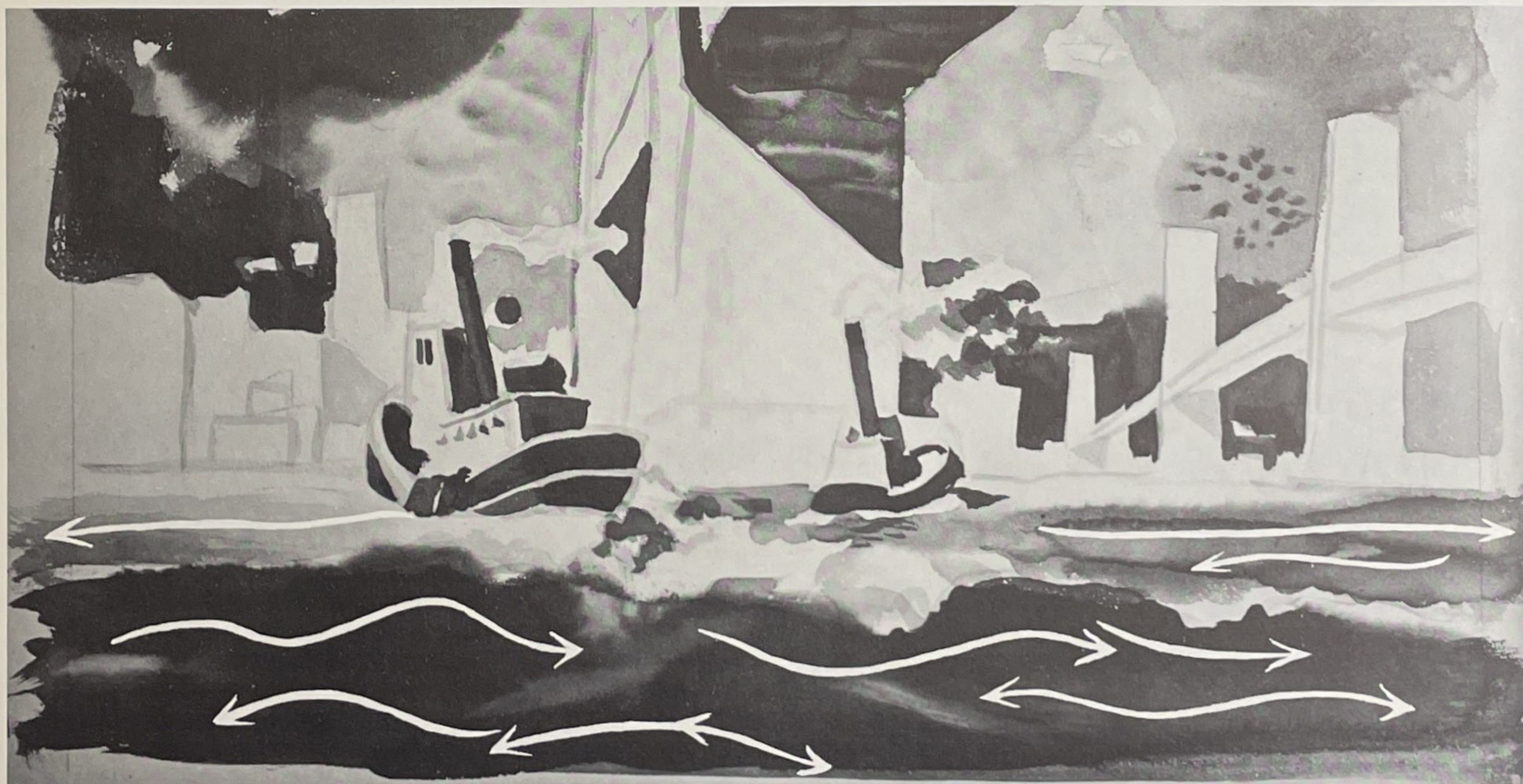
Arrows show directions of brush strokes.

The middle ground

Now that the foreground is dry I am ready to paint the middle area. First, I wet the area at the base of the smaller bridge and up to the horizon line to make soft edges when I paint over it. I do not wet the paper at the base of the big bridge, or around parts of the foam area, because I later will paint in some sharp edges here. I use the same large round brush to apply pretty much the same colors as in the foreground, except to make them lighter in tone. This gives the picture depth. Last, I let it all settle — but while still moist — I paint the texture and shadow areas with a small round brush.
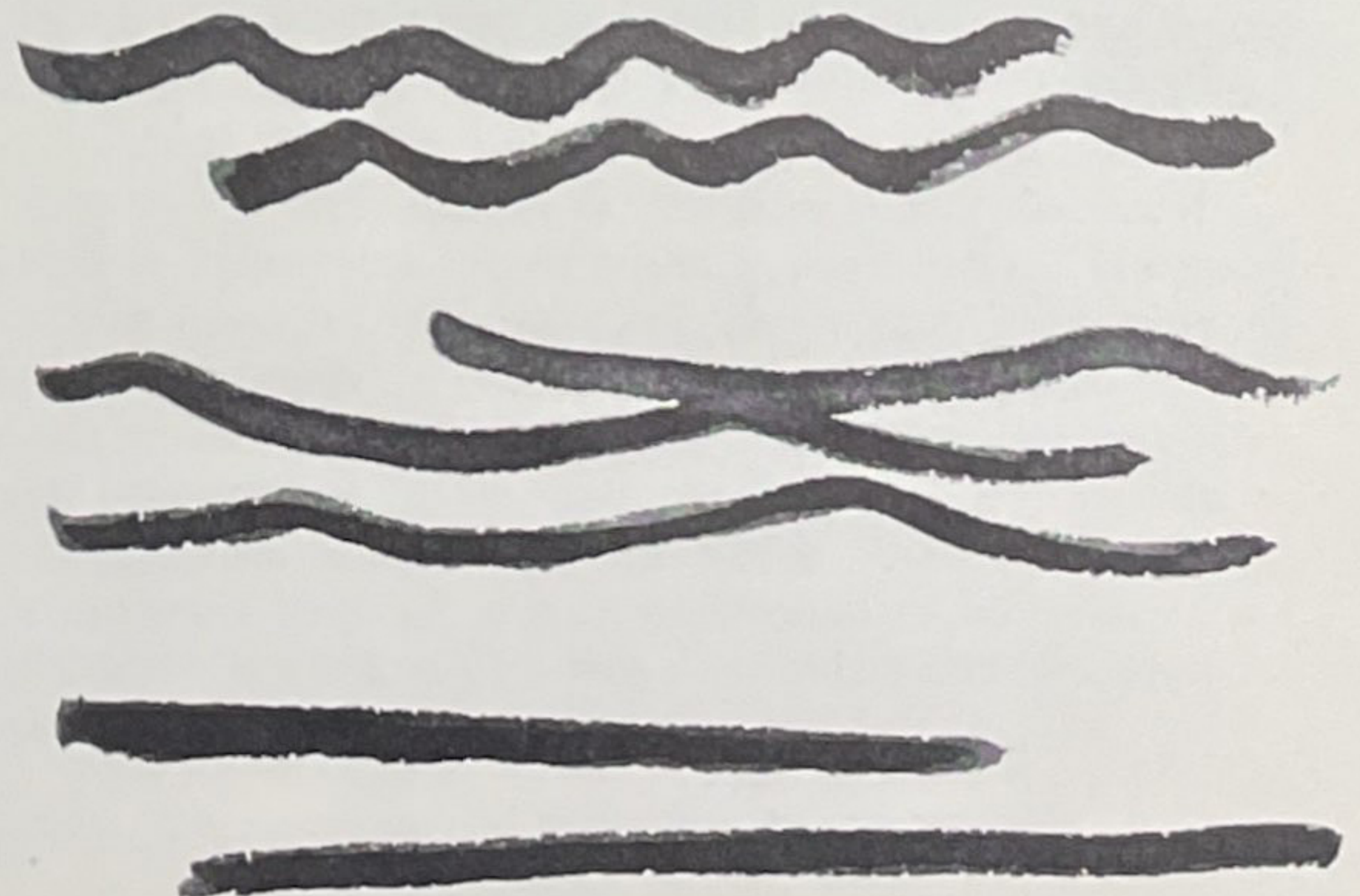
Painting water

Once again I wait for the whole water area to dry completely, then apply some straightforward strokes over it, such as the textures around the tugboats, the foaming wakes, the smoke and the light tower. Next and last I paint over the area and tune it up with the darker color here and there.

A word in general about painting water: when in repose, the sea, lake or river resembles a mirror which reflects the color and shapes of nearby surroundings. To paint these reflections and to give water its soft, wet feeling I think you'll find, as I do, that water color is an ideal medium.

When painting water I try to make my brush strokes follow the direction of the waves. If a sea is rough, like that in the picture we have been painting, I make my brush strokes curved and wavy. If the water is gently rolling I use more gently undulating strokes and more horizontally applied. If the surface is calm and entirely untroubled I keep my strokes going smoothly at parallel with the horizon. Brush stroke direction thus becomes the servant of mood.

I have felt earthquakes and seen storms from my childhood in San Francisco and later in China, but I do not like to paint outdoors under such violent conditions. I prefer to make my own storms within the peace and calm of my studio.

Finishing the painting

Finishing a water color picture is the hardest part. It takes a lot of thought and detailed work that doesn't go so rapidly as the early painting of large areas with a big brush. You have to work with a small brush and go carefully over such details as the flying birds, the smoke, the clouds, parts of the bridges and such. All this takes time but it gives the painting a nice finish and makes it look complete. It helps give a feeling of aliveness to contrast with the inanimate, overpowering man-made structure of the bridges. Yet with all this I try to keep my details simple and spontaneous looking — anything to keep them from being tired and worked over. Finishing a painting must be done carefully and thoughtfully.
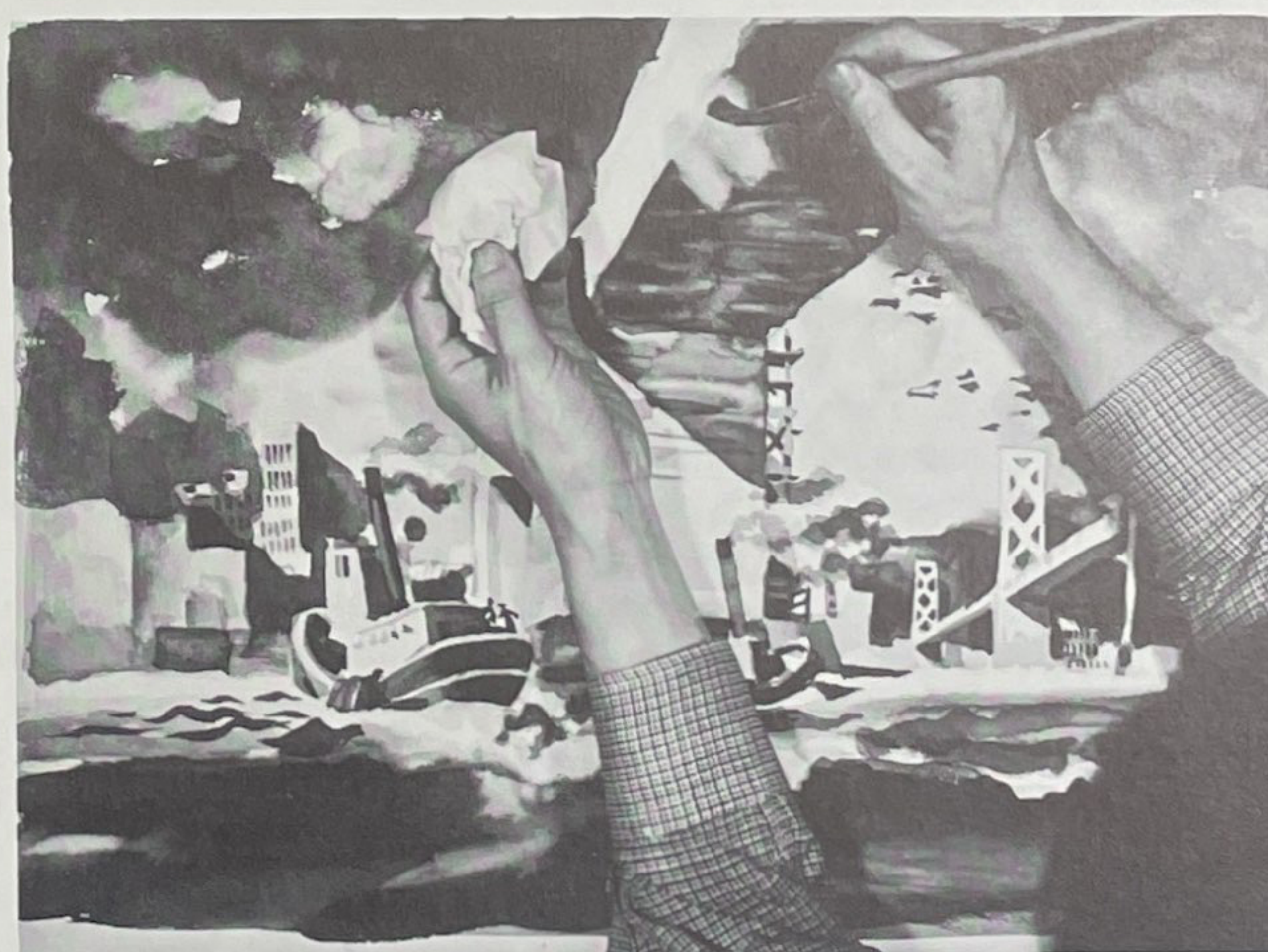
To soften the edge of the bridge and make it look wind-blown I first wet a stiff oil painting brush and wash off some of the area. Then I dry it with soft tissue paper and paint back the bridge shadow with a small sable brush, just enough to create a wind-blown appearance.

" The Two Bridges "

The step-by-step process, which you have just seen demonstrated, is the way I progressed in painting "The Two Bridges" shown here in color. Since this is the original, you may notice details here and there not exactly like the equivalent details in the black and white reproduction of the demonstration drawings. Such discrepancies are unimportant and need not concern you.

I like to paint bridges and the harbor life that goes on around them. Actually the subject matter for "The Two Bridges" is a composite of many bridges I have seen and sketched in the many places where I have lived and studied. Parts of it come from my memory of Hong Kong where the earth is black and the sea and sky can become very stormy and awesome. Sometimes typhoons are in back of the sky.

The tugboats and bridges are like those I have studied and sketched many times in San Francisco and New York City. I have even tried to get some of the smoke and noise and dirt of the big city into the picture. So you see, I put together all my thoughts and experience from childhood up to now — Hong Kong and San Francisco in the back of my memory and New York City in front of me.

You may never see Hong Kong, San Francisco or even New York. You may live in Kansas or North Dakota or London or Geneva, Switzerland. No matter where you are, the opportunities for thrilling observation and painting what you observe are ever yours. In every section of our country and the world are aspects of nature that the enthusiastic water colorist can translate into beautiful pictures. Look about you. There may be "acres of diamonds" in your own backyard. There is fascinating subject matter everywhere — whether you live in a city tenement, a Northwest village, near the forests, in the mountains, on the plains or in a castle on the Rhine. Water color painting is a universal language that is understood to the ends of the earth. Make it speak out for you — articulate and clear — to be heard and respected.

How I paint a water color – by *Adolf Dehn*

People often think of me as a painter who works in the open countryside. The countryside is often my subject — but I never actually paint out-of-doors. I'm glad people feel that way about my work, though; it probably shows that I've been able to see nature best when I was just wandering with my sketch pad, as idly as a poet.

As a rule I sketch on the spot and then imagine and recompose in the studio. Of course I've had my fling at painting out-of-doors — everybody does. Here's a paradox: you can't be truly imaginative inside the studio until you've had your experience outside the studio. You have to do some painting face to face with nature if only to find out that all grass isn't green and all tree trunks aren't brown. Paint outside and then repaint indoors — that's one of the best ways to learn.

Transparency — that's the great word in water color. But here's still another paradox: transparency comes from the water in water color, not just from the paint — an important point to remember. There's quite a range in the tube paints sold as transparent water color. Naples yellow and chromium oxide green dull, for instance, are both relatively opaque, and all the rest of the colors are somewhat so if used out of the tube. On the other hand, casein colors, considered opaque, can be made transparent by adding enough water. I am going to show you that there are no rigid lines between the two methods.

And now a word about the subject of my demonstration. The farmland of southern Minnesota, where I grew up, is the country that I know best and love. I still go back summers to visit and draw. The painting I am going to do is based on a sketch I made there some summers ago. I was strolling in the way that I like best, not encumbered by any painting equipment, with a sandwich in one pocket and a pad in the other. No struggle with the wind, bugs, or the fickle sun to distract me from the big panorama I was after. I want to show you first what I saw and what I then imagined and changed.

Palette, brushes, and paints

A large plate is my favorite palette. Around the rim I have squeezed out colors arranged roughly in lighter and darker groupings. They include yellow ochre, cadmium yellow, sepia, neutral tint, alizarin crimson, Winsor red, chromium oxide green dull, Hooker's green, permanent green pale, Payne's gray, ultramarine, black, and opaque white. Out of a large assortment of brushes I selected three — a one-inch flat sable, a quarter-inch flat sable, and a small round sable. With these I find that I can do practically anything.

1 Sketch made out-of-doors

This sketch, made with pencil on a 9x12-inch pad, shows part of Little Moose Lake. The house on the other side was Paulson's place, where we got milk. The notes scribbled in at the bottom are to indicate the colors in main areas. As I studied my sketch I felt that the distant part would have to be simplified, the sky and water given more importance. These changes were made when I redrew the scene freely on the large sheet.


2 Working wet on a dry paper

On a 20x29-inch sheet of Whatman paper (cold press, 140 pounds) I lightly sketched the essentials of the scene before soaking and stretching the paper. I personally would never do a water color without first soaking the paper (15 minutes in the bathtub) and then stretching it and taping it to a board. If you don't do this, you are likely to have trouble with buckling, either during the painting or while the picture is drying. You would then have a messy — even impossible — matting or framing job. Sometimes I work with the paper saturated, just as it comes from the soaking (with excess water removed), but here I let the paper dry overnight. Generally I find washes on dry paper are cleaner and fresher than on the saturated surface. But even in this dry method, I wet the paper enough to avoid sharp edges.

Using the large flat sable, I washed clear water over the entire upper surface, leaving only the foreground dry. Immediately I covered the sky with a wash of warm light gray and, while this was still wet, I brushed a cooler, darker gray into the upper sky. Then, while the lake area was also still wet, I covered it evenly with a middle gray.
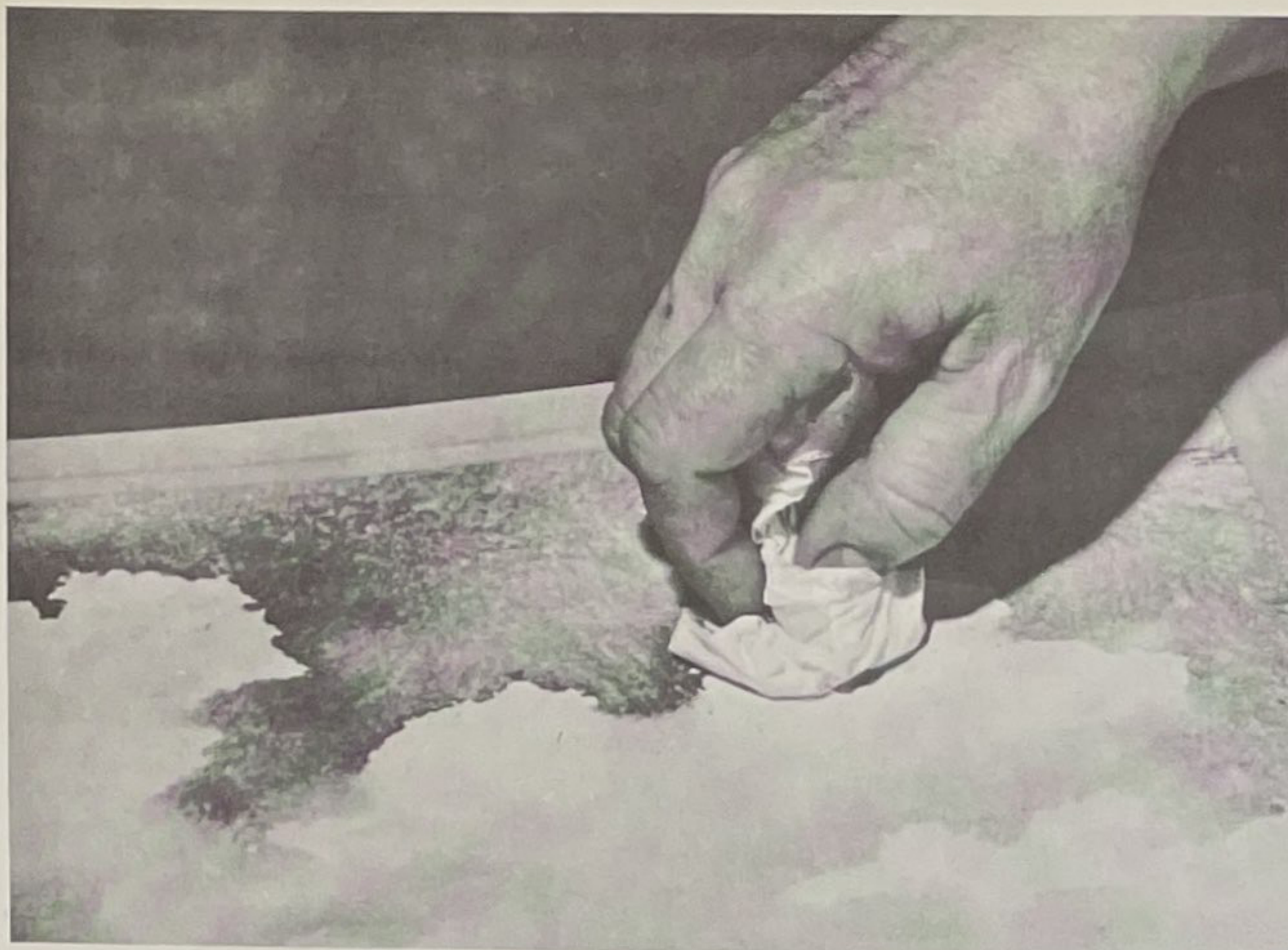
3 Clouds with Kleenex

Here you see me picking out ragged cloud formations with a dampened Kleenex tissue. I removed the gray color on the upper clouds while the wash was still quite wet, discarding the tissue as soon as it was dirty.

4 Sky and water in grays

Why grays instead of blues? Because blue is hard to combine with other colors — and it's overused and obvious. Gray is fine with everything. This stage shows the range of tone in the sky. The lower clouds have softer, vaguer edges mainly because the wash was allowed to dry in more before the tissue was applied. Using tissues successfully is a matter of knowing what effects you can get with the paper in different stages of dryness. This you can only learn by personal experiment. Darker, cooler grays were brushed along the edges of the opposite shore with long strokes of the quarter-inch flat sable.

5 Greens worked wet

In this stage greens covered most of the picture except sky and water. I worked from lighter to darker colors. Using the large flat sable, I washed the entire near and far land areas with a fresh, light green. While this was still wet, I blended darker greens and touches of yellow ochre along fields and trees in the background. Some I blotted with a dampened tissue to lighten and soften edges. In order to establish a color key for the foreground, I brushed a very dark green into the lower right section while it was still wet. Grasses along the top edge here were pulled up with the side of the flat sable. Finally I scrubbed a brownish red on the tree clumps at the horizon with a dry-brush technique.

6 The foreground develops

With the opaque yellow still on my large flat sable, I dry-brushed a light texture which is barely visible in the foreground area. Then I washed a slightly darker green over the adjoining field.


7 Fine lines

Tree branches were scraped out of the wet paint with the corner of a razor blade. This is one of many techniques you can develop by trying out different tools.

8 Sparkling whites

This detail of the barnyard shows the razor blade used in two striking and different ways. This area was first washed over with browns touched with ochres. While still wet, it was scraped with the flat side of a razor blade. This removed enough of the top color to let the white of the paper show through in a loose texture. The chickens were also made while the area was still wet by an even more surprising razor-blade technique. Here the corner of the blade was used to jab into the damp paper. People have often wondered about a similar effect in my water color that hangs in the Metropolitan. It is the little bits of the paper actually dug up with the blade that catch the light and give vivid flecks of white. The barn was washed with deep alizarin crimson, with browns used on the slanting roof.
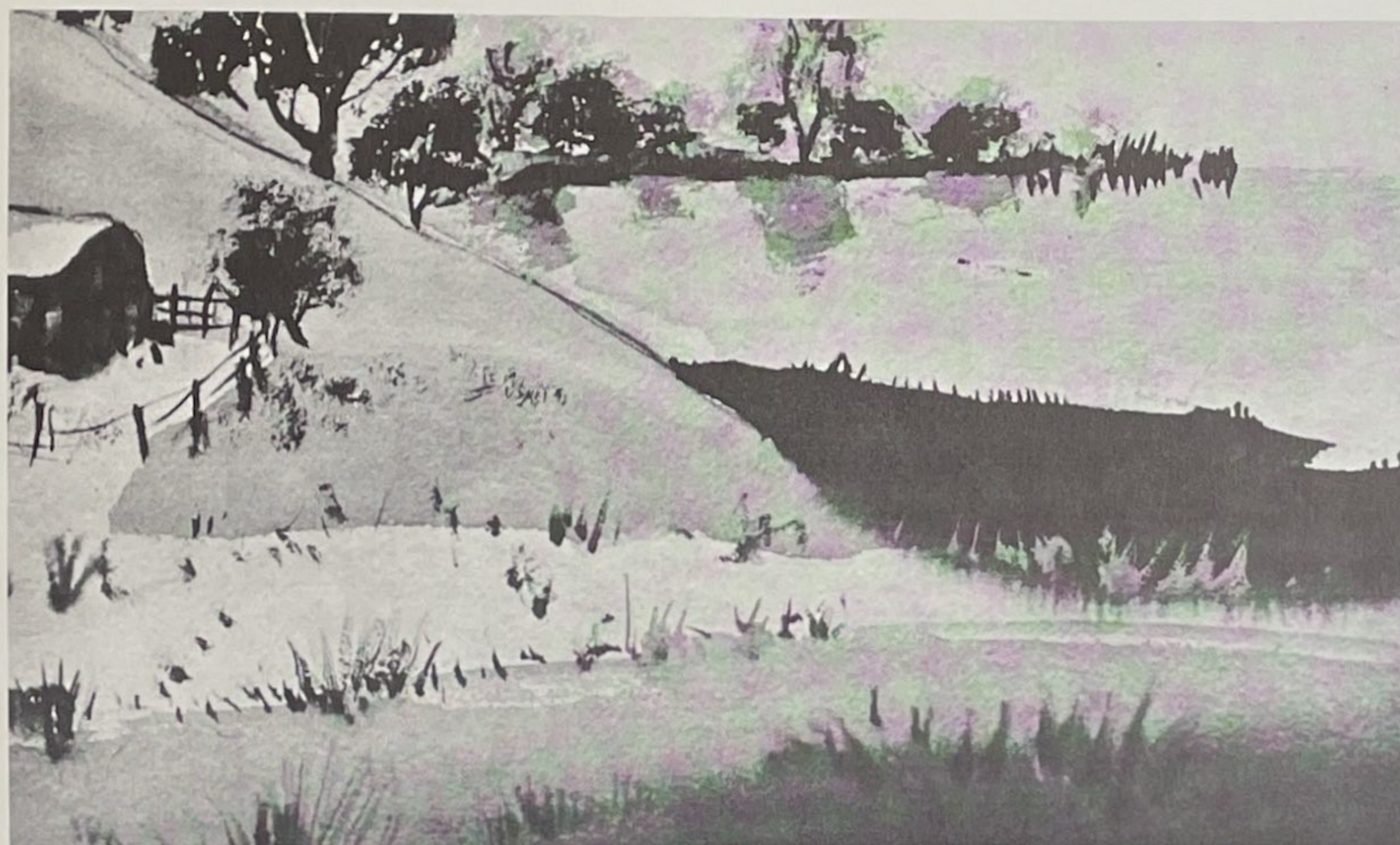
9 Final accents

I used the small round sable for such final touches as darkening fence posts and tree trunks. It was also used to give texture to the haystacks and for the grasses in the foreground. A slightly darker green wash was first brushed across the lower foreground. Some grasses were stroked into this while it was still wet. Those at the right that appear light against dark were made with green mixed with opaque white.

10 Opaque touches and dry brush

The important thing is to save opaque touches until you are almost finished; then you are not tempted to overdo them. This detail from the center of the picture shows the lighter trees (center and left), on which I used yellow ochre mixed with opaque white. On the darker pines and red trees I scrubbed colors directly out of the tube so that the paint touched only the top grain of the paper, giving a feathery effect.

11 Afterthoughts

Days after the picture was supposedly finished, I decided to soften the contrast between the sky and the dark clumps of trees on the hill on the right. By continuously wetting and gently rubbing the brush over this small area I was able to lift up some of the color with Kleenex. The result is an effect of greater variety and distance.

12 The finished picture

The preliminary sketch, showing the tones for the water color.

Making a water color in black and white

In this demonstration I show you how I paint a water color in black and white. Fine pictures can be painted without the use of hue — and black and white seemed an apt choice for this somber subject. Try some pictures in black and white. Not only are they fun to do, but they also give you good experience and practice in value control.

The success of a picture like this depends on two things. One is
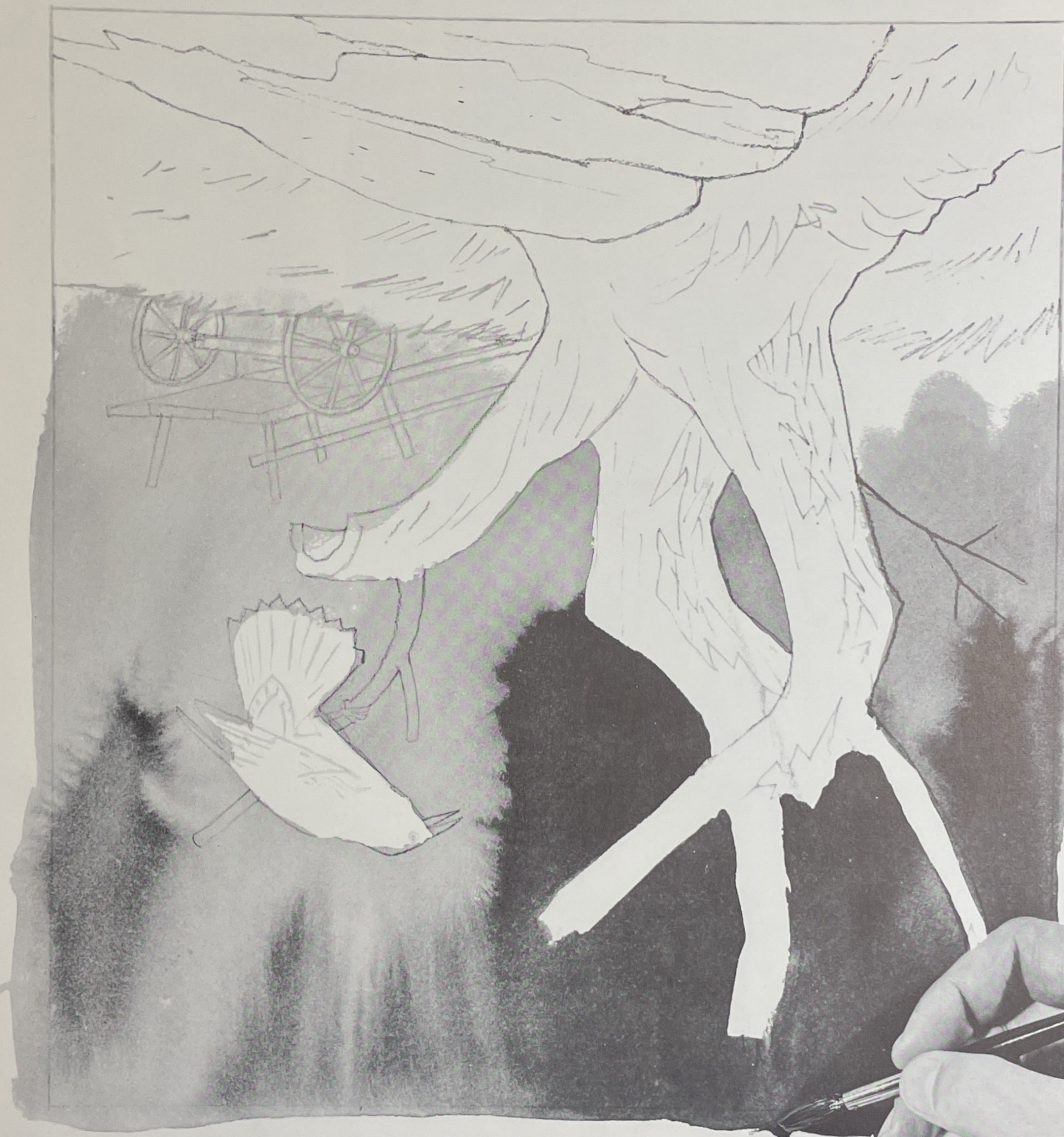
1 From a full-size preliminary drawing I traced down on my paper *all* the lines I needed to guide me in painting my picture. To remove any residual glue size, I prepared the paper by floating a wash of clean water over it. I allowed this to dry completely.

To paint the sky I turned my drawing upside down and rapidly ran a medium gray wash over the entire sky area. While it was still wet I added brushfuls of much darker wash to the upper sky.

the artist's knowledge of how to use water color, and the other is a careful working plan of just what steps to follow to get the effect he wants. Examine the little pencil sketch at the upper left on the facing page and you will see that it contains all the elements which appear in the finished picture, including the general areas of darks and lights. Such a sketch enables me to proceed in an orderly way without fumbling.

Stevan Dohanos
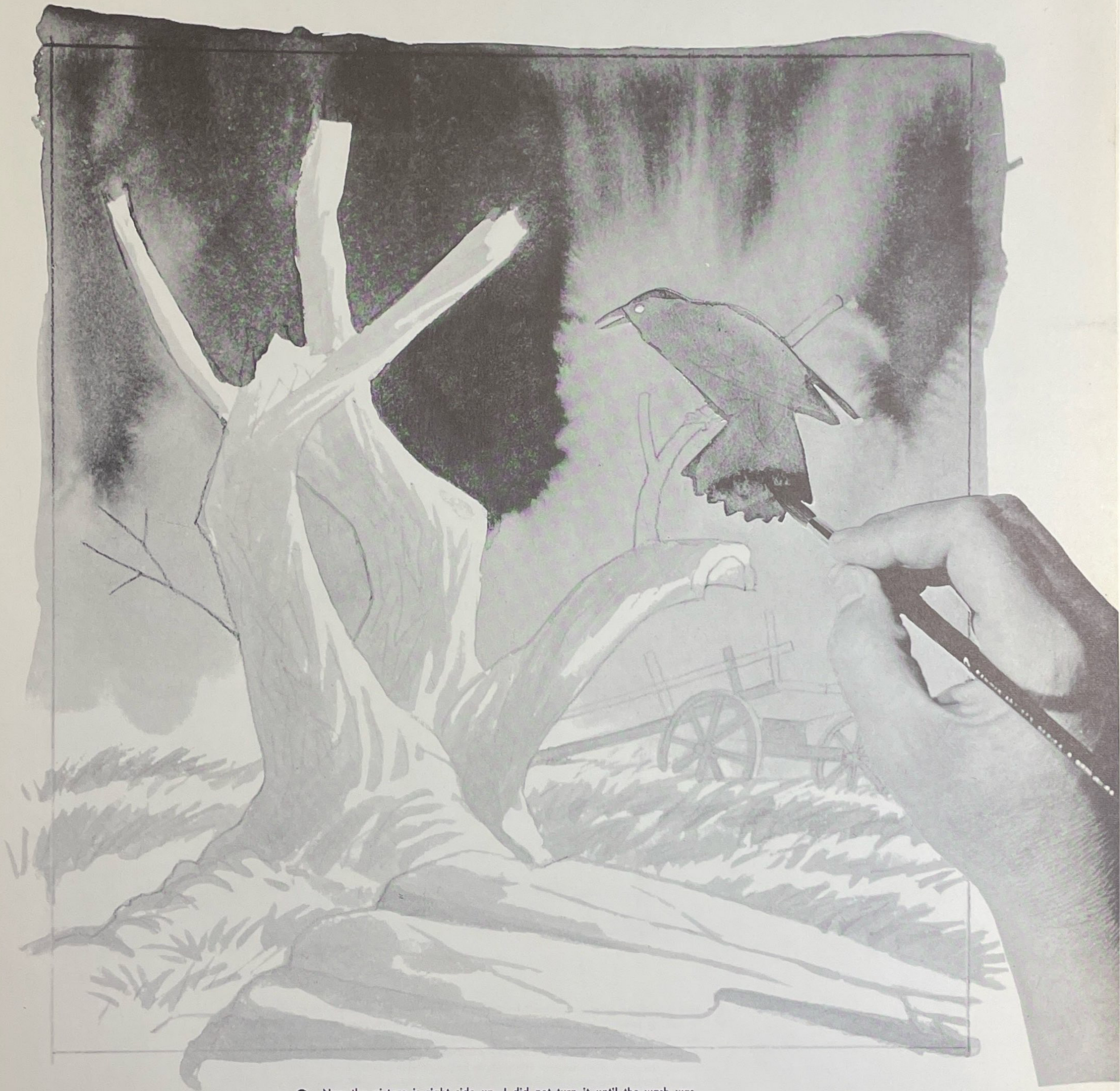
2 Now the picture is right side up. I did not turn it until the wash was dry and the dark tones could not run down into the areas I wanted to keep light. Here I start on the next important step — establishing the range of values in all parts of the picture. I lightly paint in the shadows on the tree, rock, wagon, and grass, and then I paint the dark crow. It will now be easier to judge how dark to make the rest of the values I paint.

Notice that in some places the sky wash ran over the pencil lines of the sketch. These overruns will disappear as I continue to work on the picture.

3 Now I "pull my picture together." I adjust the relationship of my values by making some of them darker. I also make some of the values contrast more strongly with those next to them. For example, I have darkened the shadow sides of the tree trunks so they stand out from the sky, while leaving the sunlit sides the pure white of the paper. In doing this I have begun to create the rough bark texture.

With a dark wash I have painted the wagon, making it look solid and real against the sky. I have also strengthened the values of the foreground shadows.

While some detail shows now, I haven't yet given it the finish I plan — I've been more concerned with painting the large, simple areas until their values have the correct relationship.

4 Next I put in the final details and dark accents as planned in my full-size preliminary sketch. I've carefully modeled the shape of the crow, giving it strong black accents. The rough texture of the bark on the tree now makes a fine contrast with the smoother sky in back of it. Both tree and grass were finished with a series of small strokes, and opaque white was used to sharpen up the jagged ends of the broken limbs and indicate a few blades of light grass.

Check back and see how the original thumbnail sketch served as a guide for painting the values of the finished picture.

The picture is now ready for matting. The mat will conceal the ragged edges. (On the following pages you are told how to mat your pictures.)

How to cut a mat

Your water colors will look their best when matted. You can easily cut the mats yourself. All you need is a metal straightedge, ruler or yardstick, a mat knife, mat board and a strong steady arm. Mat board has a pebbled finish and each side is a different color. The most usual combination is white on one side, cream on the other. White and gray is the next most popular combination. Gray and cream is another. Most water colors look best with a white mat, but in many cases a gray or cream mat heightens the colors or the total effect. As with most everything connected with art, it takes practice before you can cut a professional-looking mat. Practice cutting small mats out of the waste pieces of mat board. Generally a mat is the same width on the top and sides and slightly wider at the bottom. When we refer to a three-by-four-inch (3x4) mat, we mean it is three inches wide at the top and sides and four inches at the bottom. This and a two-and-a-half-by-three-inch (2½x3) are widely used for the average-size water color, which will be about 14 x 21 inches.
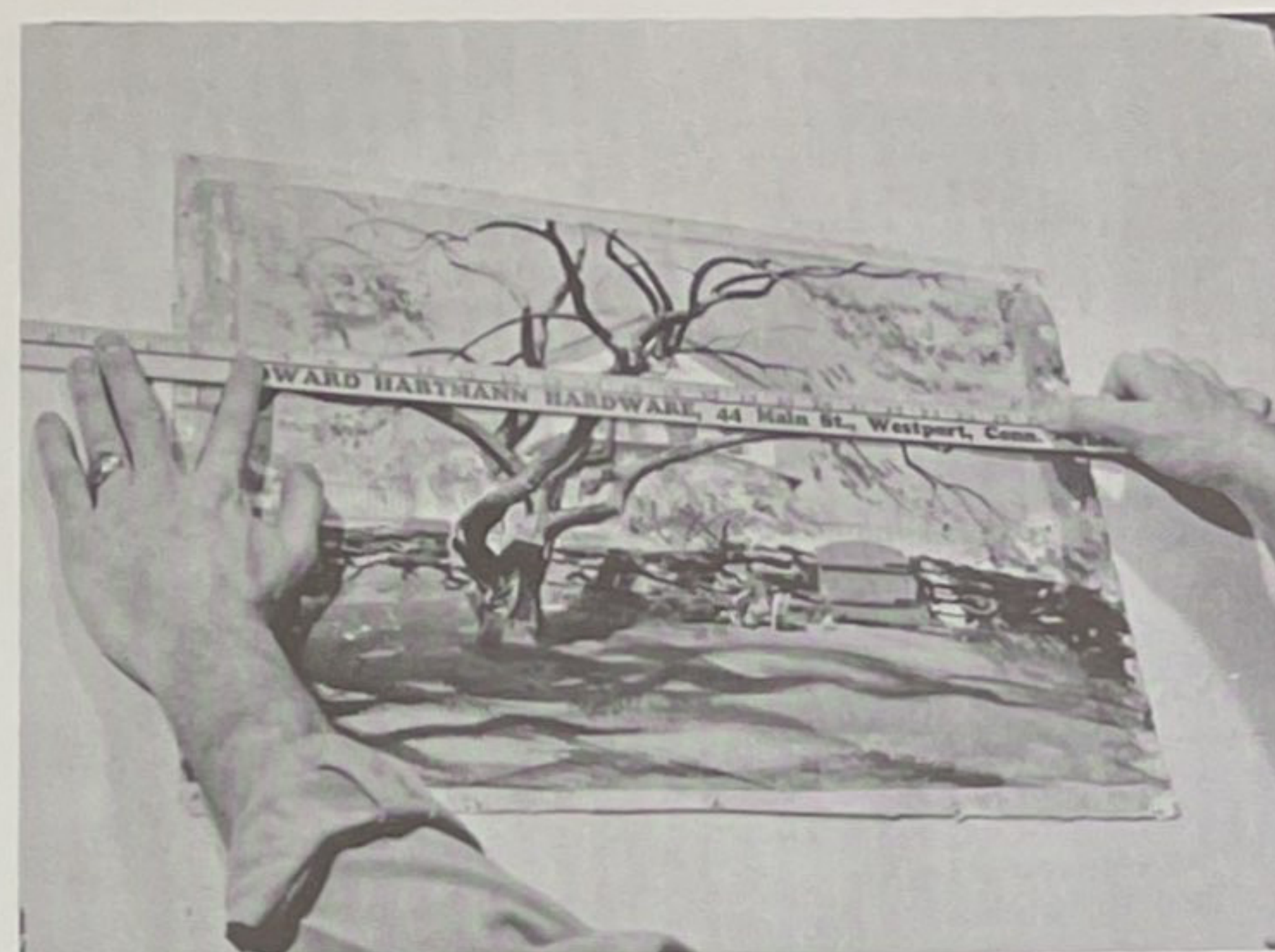

1 To get the over-all dimensions of the mat, add the width of the two sides, in this case six inches. Place the six-inch mark of a yardstick on the left edge of the picture. The over-all dimension is at the right edge. For the height add seven inches.


2 Place mat board on a *clean*, flat surface with the face *down*. Do all your measuring on the back of the mat to keep the face *clean*. Mat board is cut square by the maker, so you can measure the dimension from the side and be sure of a square mat.

3 Place your straightedge on the two points you have measured from the edge of the board. Hold the mat knife at right angles to the board and draw it along the straightedge. You can make several knife strokes on outer edges. Hold knife firm. Press heavily on the straightedge with the other hand, keeping it away from the knife.
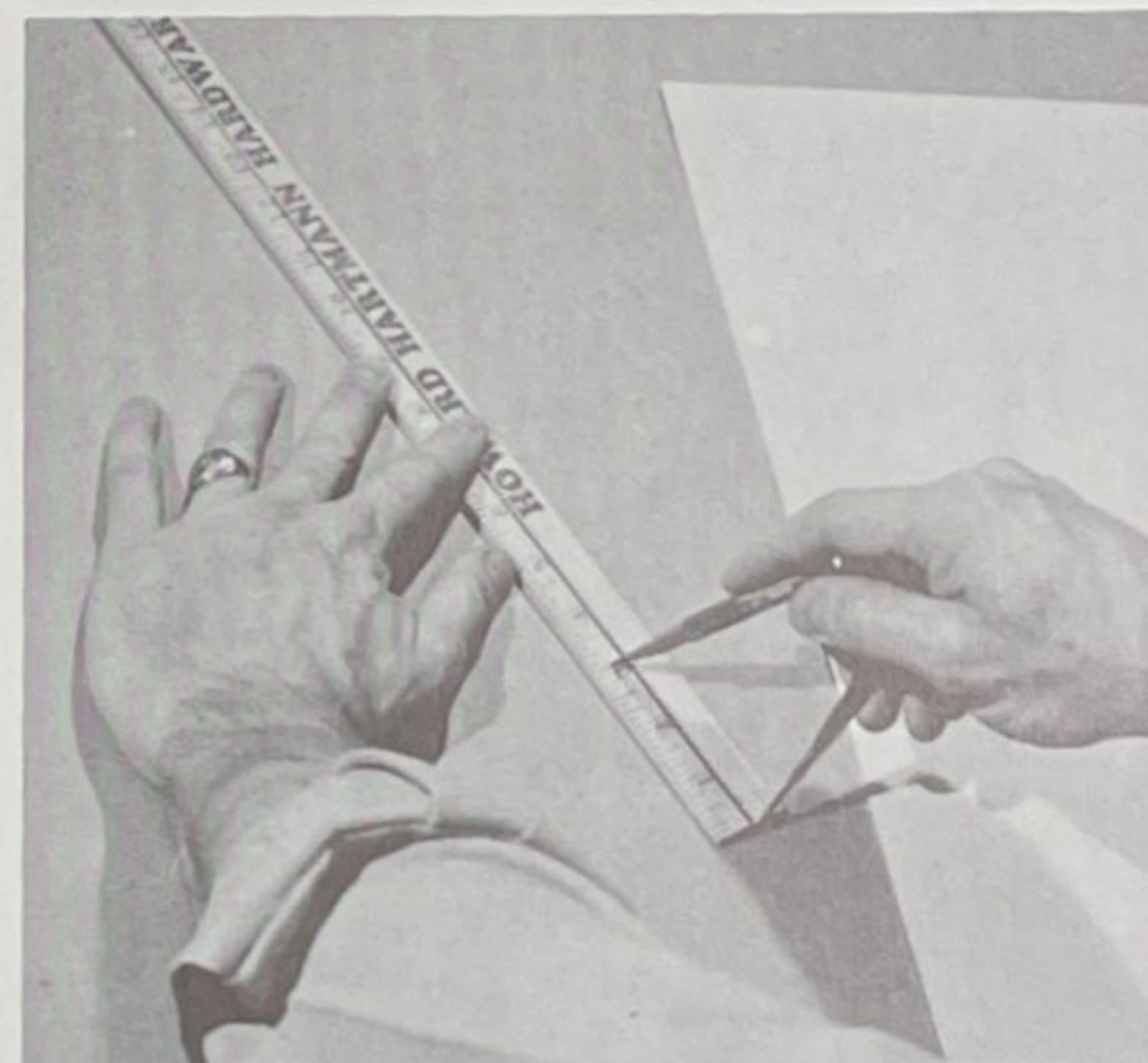

4 Open this simple dime store compass and set it at three inches. If you do not have a compass, these lines can be measured off with a yardstick.
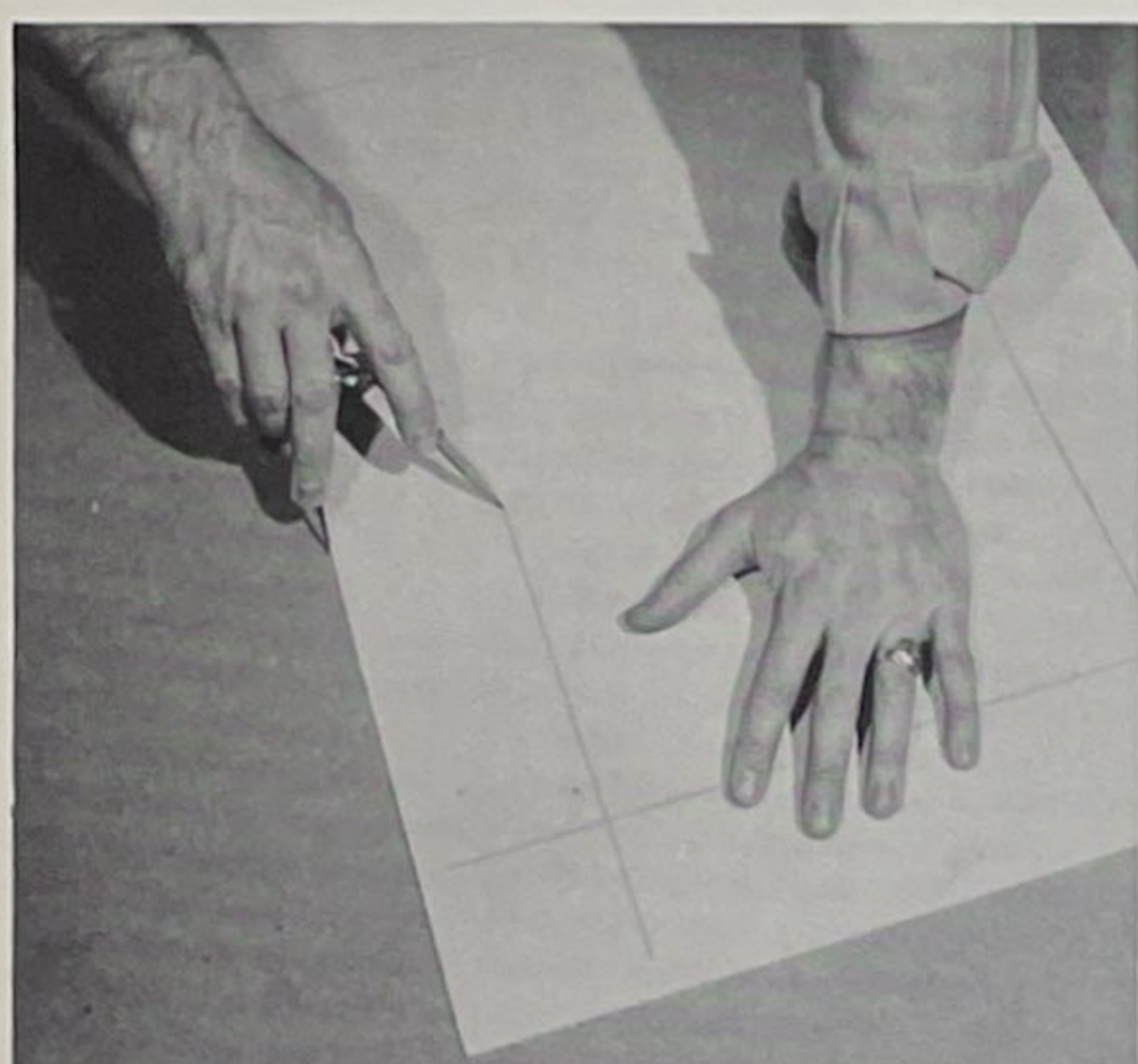
5 With the metal point held against the edge of the mat, face down, draw the compass along the top and two sides. Reset to four inches and draw the bottom line. Carry all lines out to the edge.


6 Check the correctness of your lines on your water color. It is better to measure twice and cut once. Nothing is more maddening than a nicely cut mat the wrong size.
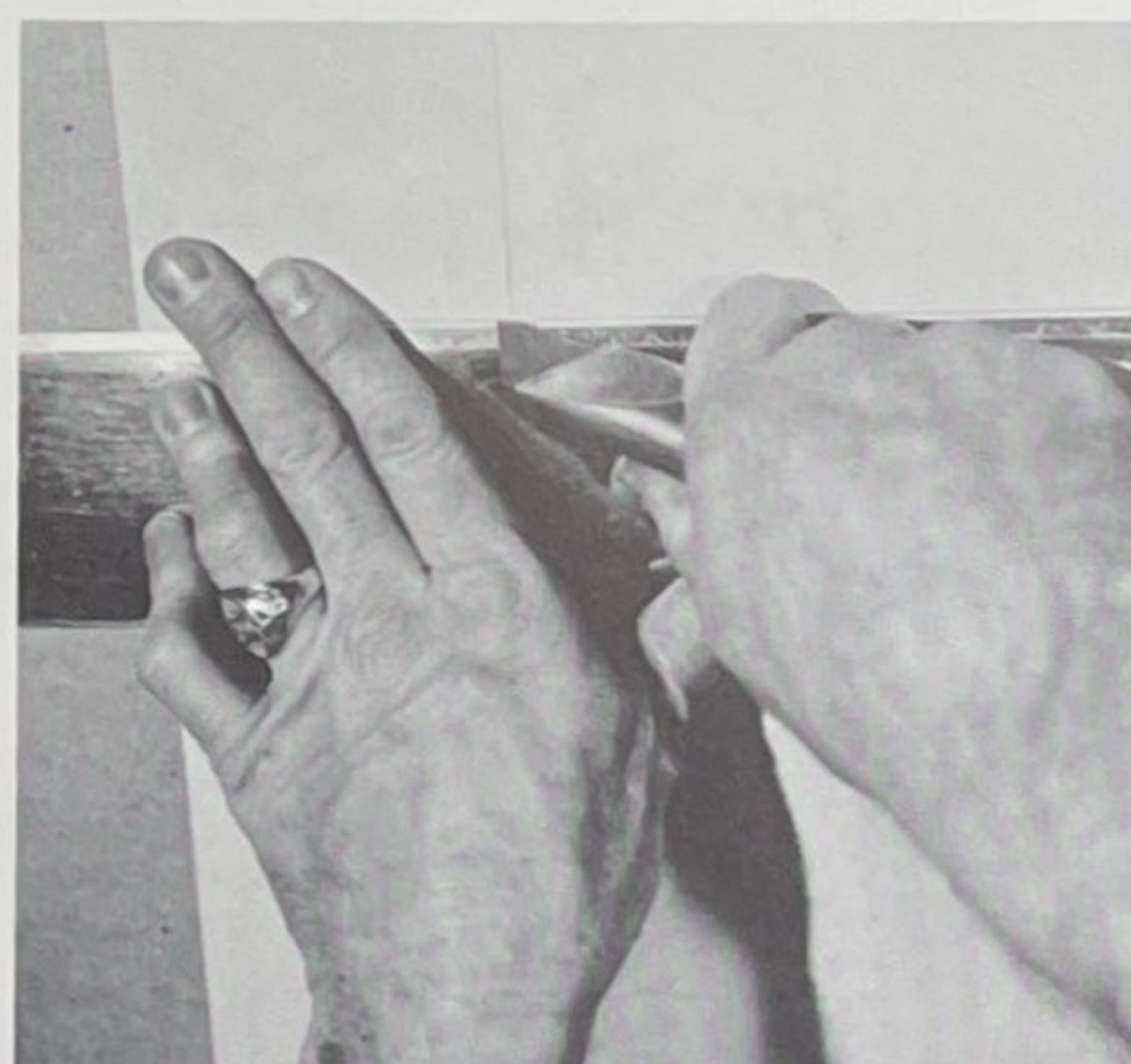
7 Place the straightedge along the pencil line. Push the point of the knife at an angle into the mat board about one-eighth inch beyond the starting line to make clean sharp corners. Because this edge is beveled, the over cut on the reverse side will be only about one-sixteenth of an inch, and won't be noticeable.

8 This is the angle for holding the knife when cutting a beveled mat. At the start, you may find it better to make a square cut by holding the knife at right angles to the paper as indicated by the black dotted lines.
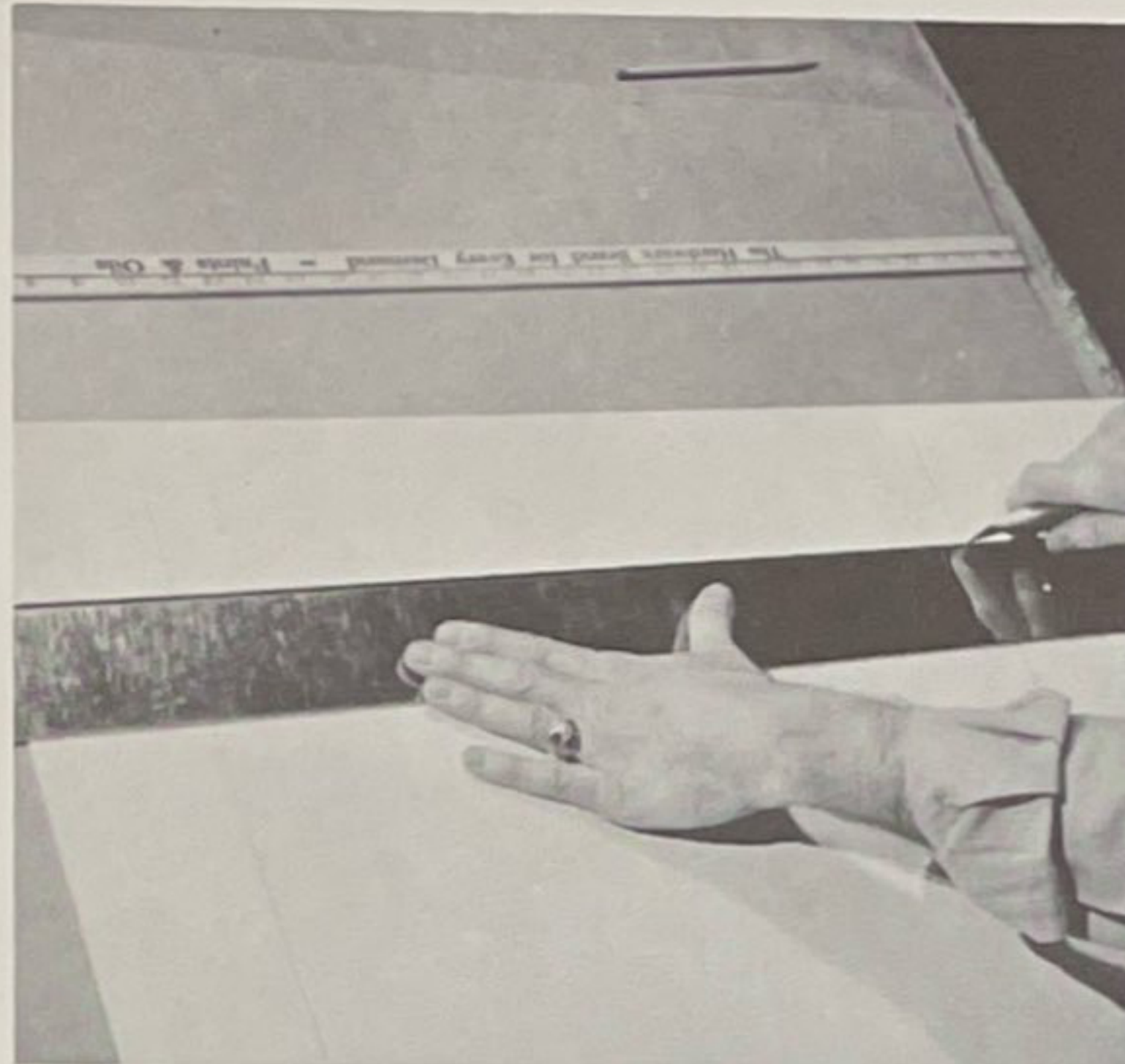

9 In one stroke, cut through the board, going one-eighth inch beyond the stopping point. Note the extra piece of mat board under the mat to enable the knife to cut *through*, thus insuring a clean cut. Remember to make this cut in one stroke to avoid a ragged edge.


10 Most professionals cut parallel to the table edge instead of at right angles as in Picture 3. The arm has an easier swing for long cuts and the knife hand can slide along the straightedge and keep it from slipping. Most beginners find it easier to cut at right angles.
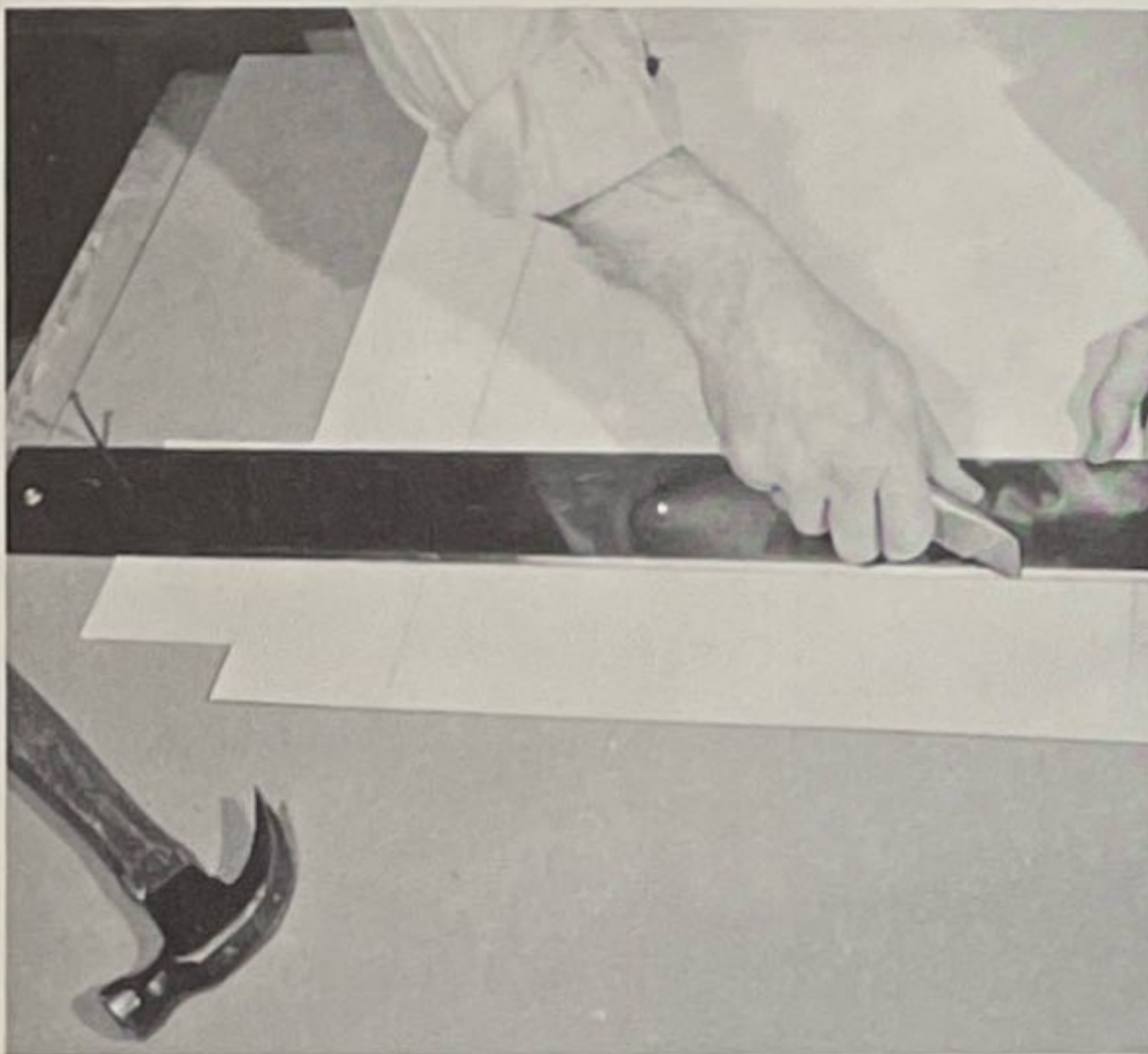

11 You may find it easier to keep the straightedge firm and on the line by resting one end against a nail driven in the cutting table. After cutting the four edges, the center should drop out of the mat. Any rough or ragged edges can be smoothed down by rubbing with fine sandpaper.
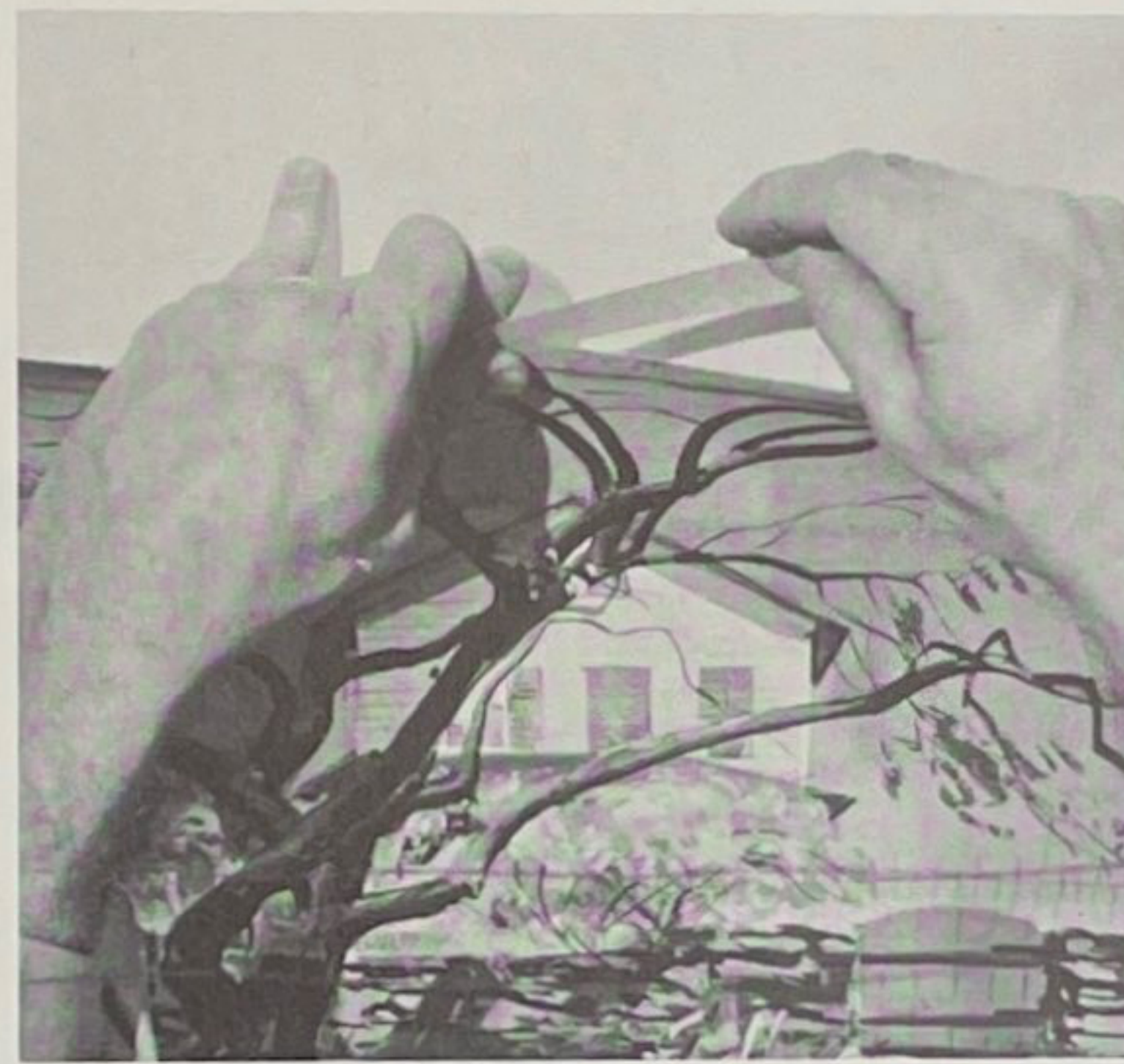

12 Attach a five or six-inch piece of masking tape along the under edge of the water color so that half of it extends beyond the edge of the paper.
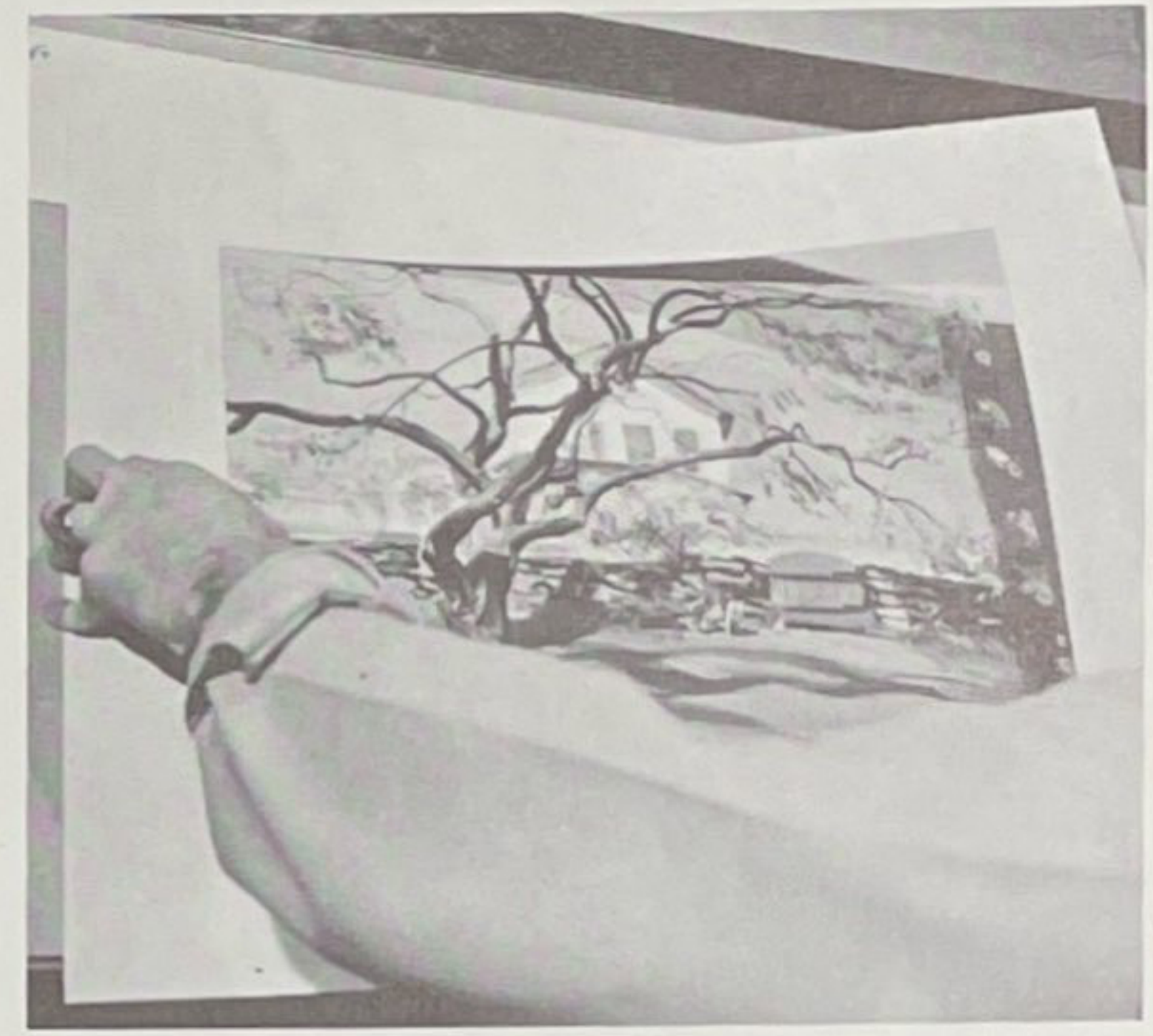
13 Now place the mat over the picture. When it is in the right position, press it against the protruding strip of tape to hold the mat and enable you to turn over both mat and picture. The extra piece of mat board raises the masking tape so it is easier to make it adhere to the mat.
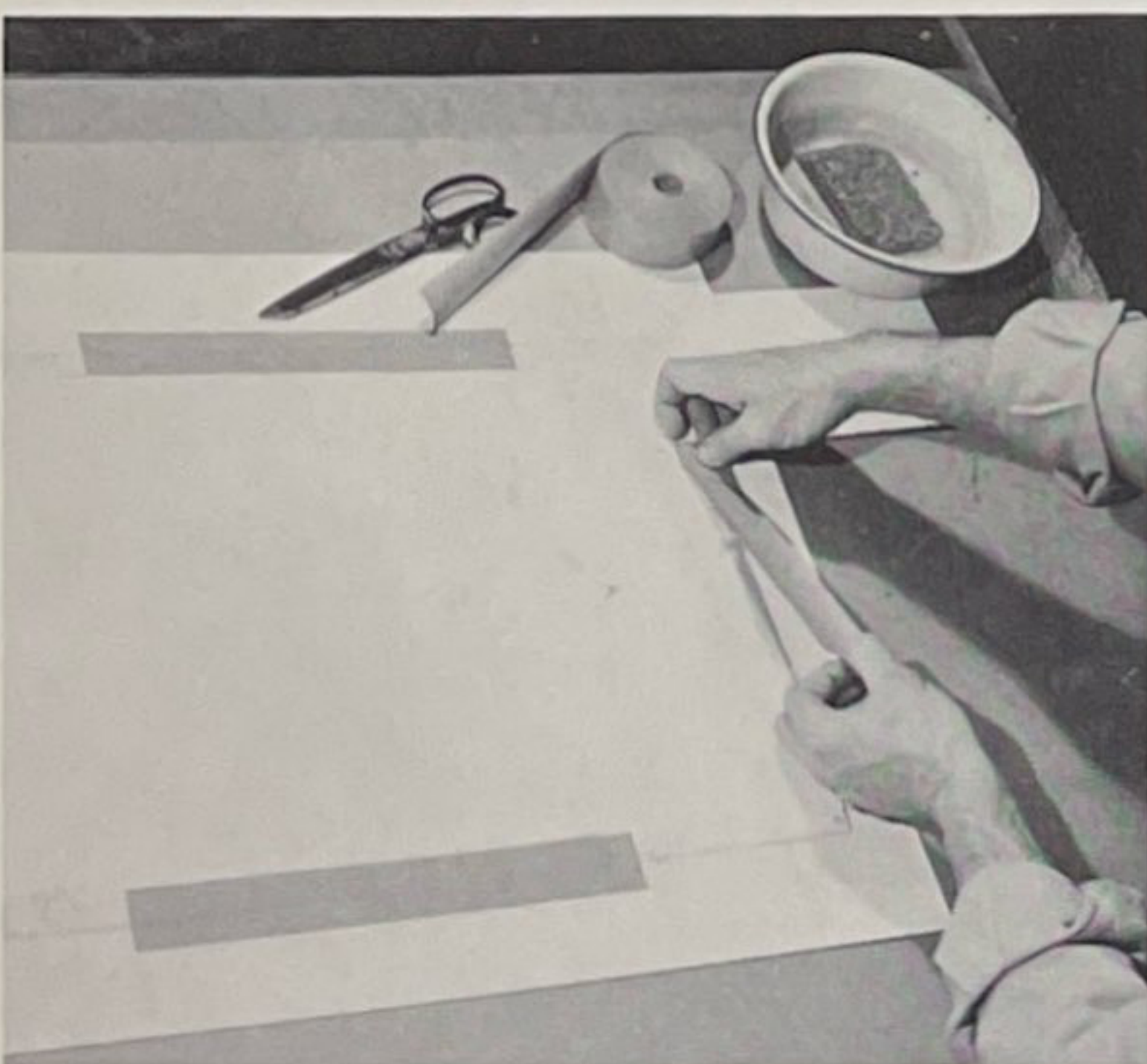
14 Cut pieces of glued paper tape about half the length of the sides to be fastened to the mat. Moisten them and glue them down. The piece of masking tape is removed and replaced with glued tape.
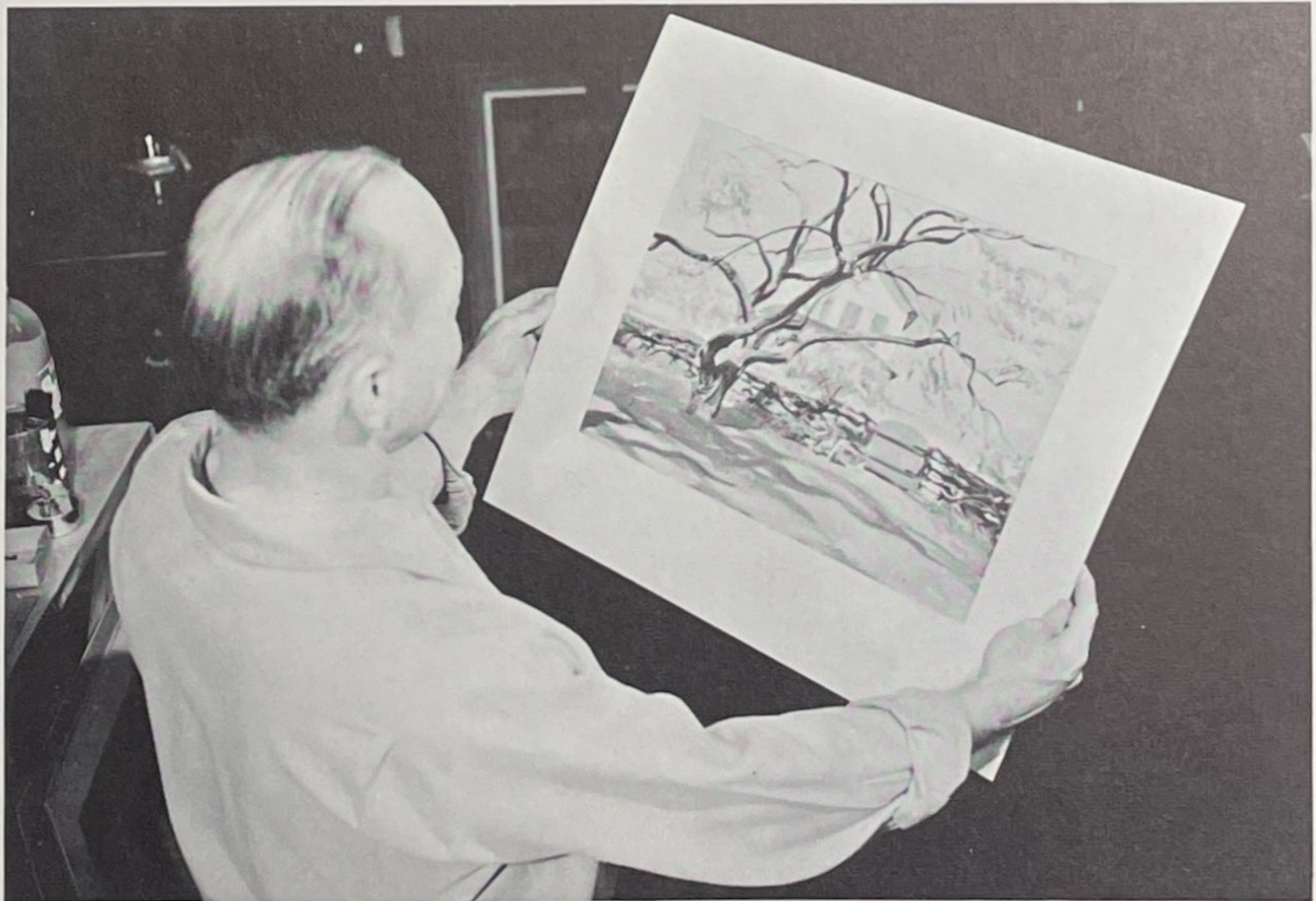

15 All ready for the show.

JOHN MARIN. Boat and Sea—Deer Island, Maine

This painting by the eminent water colorist, Marin, is a vivid demonstration of the freedom of style you are allowed by the medium. Marin chose to work in an extremely casual and sketchy way. Note his use of the dry brush and how unfinished—indeed, unpainted —certain areas seem to be. The pencil sketch lines you see in the finished water color are not left there due to negligence; they serve a purpose in carrying out the mood and rhythm of the scene he had in mind. It will be interesting for you to see how many of the various types of brush strokes—covered in this section—you can detect in this example.
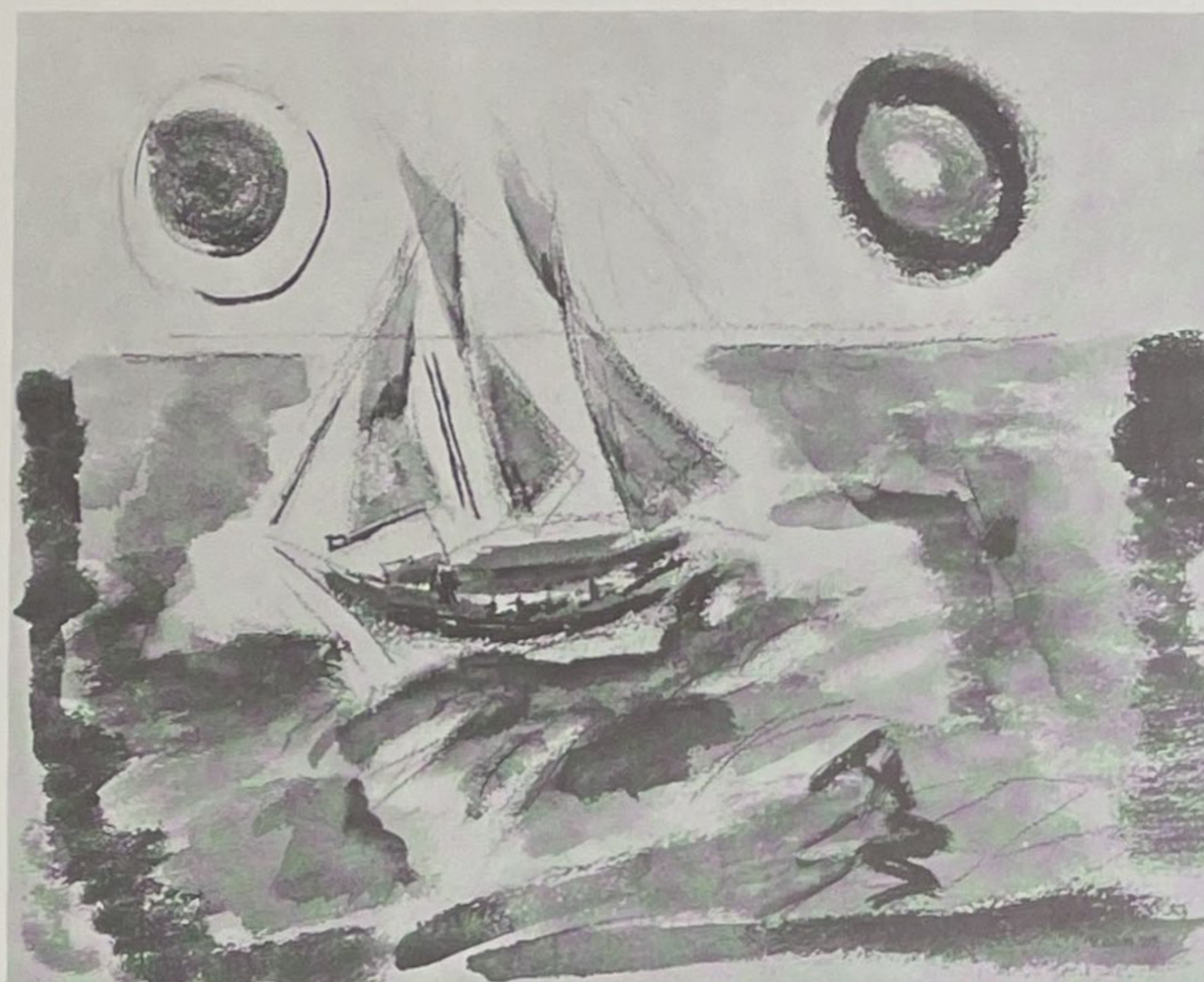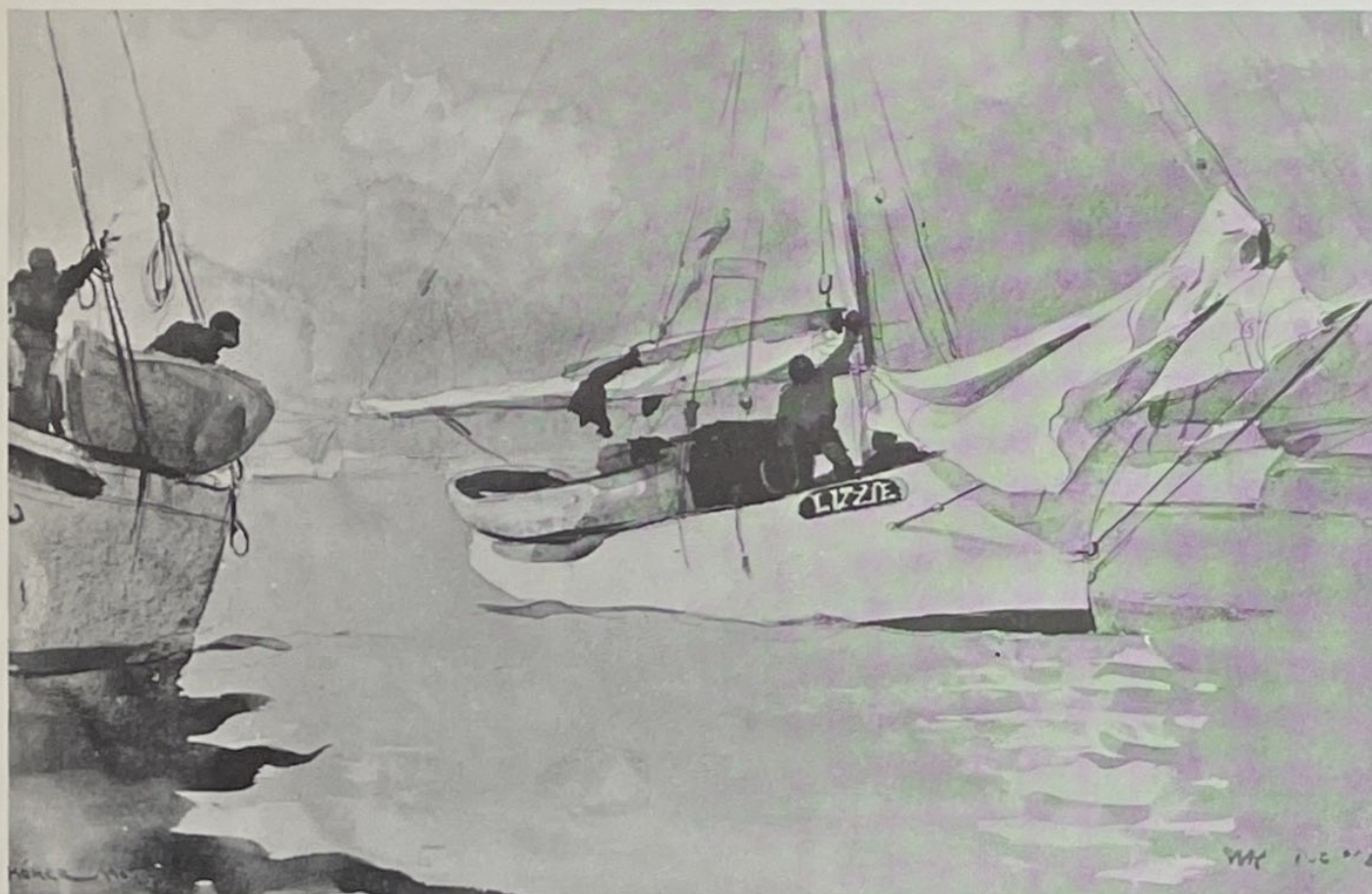
WINSLOW HOMER. Fishing Boats—Key West

Homer, one of our Old Masters of water color, is worthy of your earnest study. His techniques and brush work— his brilliance in the management of composition and effect, is aptly demonstrated in this example of his work — done in the early twentieth century. Observe how his mode of handling the medium differs from that of Marin; his is more fluid, more manipulated and controlled. Look particularly at the way the sky has been washed in lightly, then lifted out in spots, to increase the fleecy look of the great cumulus clouds. See how the value of the sky closely matches that of the distant water, thus creating a feeling of great depth. This is further accentuated by the contrast between the large boats up front and the smaller, more distant ones. Homer's mastery of the medium is probably most readily demonstrated in the direct, simple way he painted water.

STEVAN DOHANOS. Sardine Factory—Eastport, Maine

Dohanos' style is altogether different from that exemplified by the other two paintings on this page. He prefers a meticulous, more architectural approach and works for greater reality in line and form. This water color is a fine example of careful preliminary planning and sketching. Notice how Dohanos solved the many intricate problems of perspective— how exacting he has been in his handling of detail—yet the water area is washed in with contrasting freedom. There is much for you to study in the way he has built up his darker areas with colors—in some places probably several layers of wash. Notice how his sea gulls contrast with the Kingman flying birds in the "Two Bridges," shown in color on Page 39.